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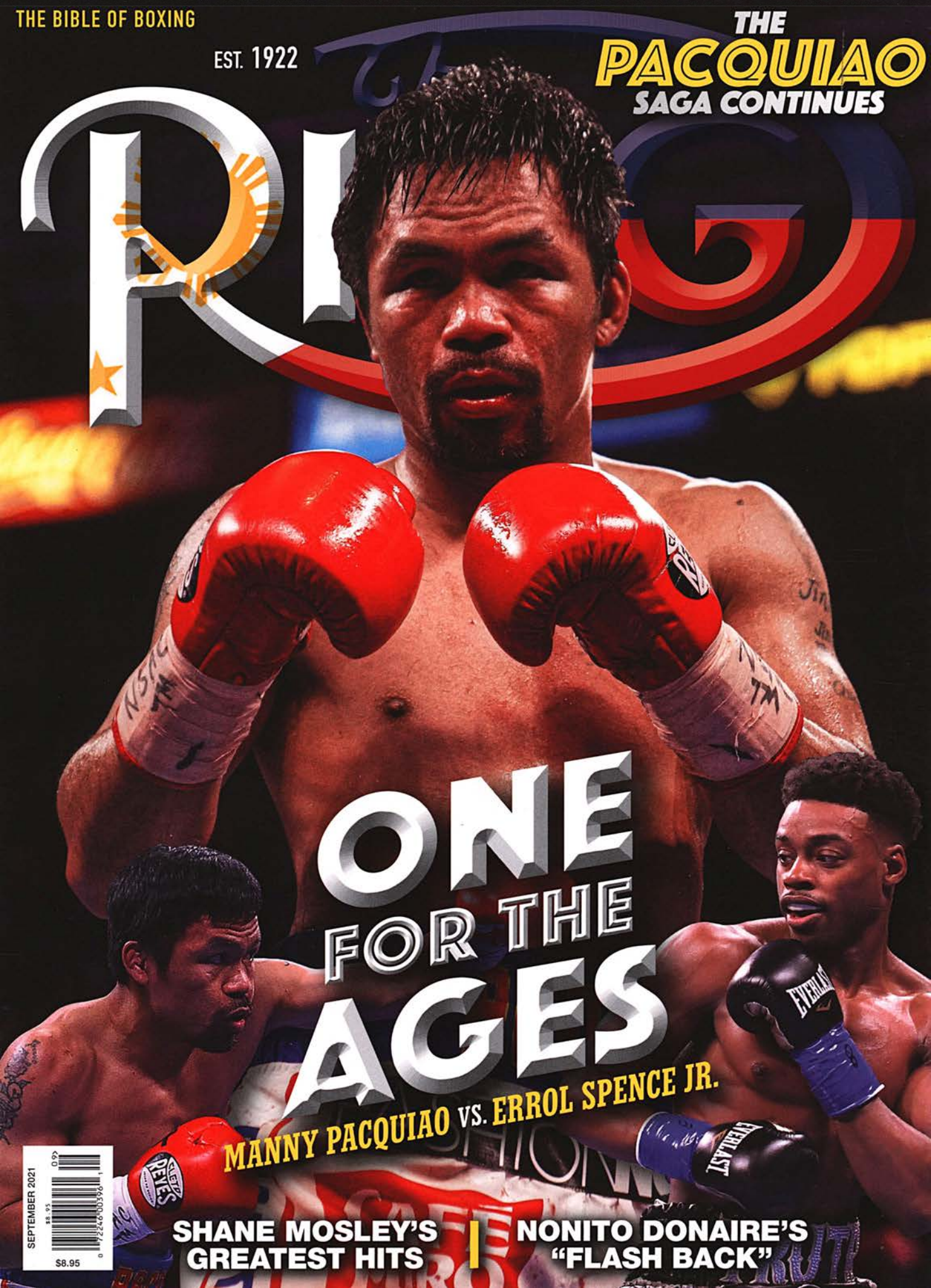

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One of boxing's most iconic trainer/fighter duos, Freddie Roach and Manny Pacquiao will bruise the mitts once again in preparation for Errol Spence Jr. on August 21.

COVER PHOTO BY SEAN MICHAEL HAM/MAYWEATHER PROMOTIONS

Ring Magazine bantamweight champion Naoya Inoue ruthlessly targeted the body of Michael Dasmarinas and emerged as a third-round knockout winner at Virgin Hotels Las Vegas on June 19.

NAOKI FUKUDA

PACQUIAO VS. SPENCE

It is quite incredible that Manny Pacquiao has not faced a single southpaw since he pummeled David Diaz to a pulp inside nine rounds back in 2008.

Despite his ridiculous resume and neverending list of achievements, it is fair to say that the Filipino icon has not faced an array of lefties during his illustrious career. However, at 42 years of age, he is preparing for a physical, powerful, prime southpaw in Errol "The Truth" Spence Jr.

A Pacquiao victory on August 21 would surprise me, but wouldn't in the same breath. It would because his American opponent has shown different aspects to his game with each passing display. Spence is entering his peak years as a professional and is looking to carve out his own legacy. On the other hand, it wouldn't surprise me because, well, this is Manny Pacquiao. The man who continuously rose through the weights and defeated whoever they put in front of him, regardless of size or power.

Manny Pacquiao fans aren't ready to write off the Filipino icon just yet.

A win sends Errol Spence Jr. to superstardom and cements his standing as a pay-per-view name on Fox Sports, which brings its financial rewards, and moves him one step away from the ultimate crown of undisputed.

Meanwhile, a victory for Manny Pacquiao reaffirms his greatness and comfortably puts him in the top 20 fighters of all time. He will surpass the achievements of his former rival, Floyd Mayweather Jr. This might just be the most significant win of his incredible career. Let that sink in.

Jamie Bourne

LEGACIES: A Pacquiao loss hands the welterweight division to a new champion with grace; a win moves him into the top 10 of all time, perhaps best lefty ever. No one will question a retirement announcement. A Spence loss will cause the boxing world to question whether the car accident diminished his abilities; a win eliminates questions about his pound-for-pound status, but Crawford is still out there. Spence has more to lose, Pacquiao has more to gain.

EFFECTIVE AGGRESSION: Pacquiao has an aggressive, offense-first style based on foot speed and hand speed; at age 42, that speed will be determined in the ring on fight night. Spence has the size and strength advantage over every welterweight; I expect that advantage will allow Spence to walk through punches early in the fight. No clear advantage to either.

RING GENERALSHIP: Pacquiao has decades of ring experience, has seen almost everything and has been knocked out and defeated, so he knows how and when to avoid trouble and when to pounce

KRONKAAART

on a weakness (see Thurman, first round). Spence has a come-forward style with fewer angles than some others but very efficient when the opponent's back is on the ropes. Advantage: Pacquiao, IF the foot speed is still there.

DEFENSE: Pacquiao's foot speed upon entry can get him into awkward positions, and he can be hit. Spence is vulnerable against a right hook thrown from the lefty stance – see the Leonard Bundu fight and the end of the 12th round vs. Danny Garcia; both fighters landed right hooks flush on Spence's jaw. If Pacquiao lands that same right hook, it spells trouble.

CLEAN, HARD PUNCHES: Gotta call this one even, even with Spence's power advantage, as timing beats both speed and power – there's no telling until fight night who brings the sharper reflexes.

VERDICT: I expect this fight to go 12 if Pacquiao is the same Pacquiao that fought Thurman and Spence is the same Spence that fought Danny Garcia and Mikey Garcia. The wild card is whether Pacquiao has the stamina to go 12.

James Tiu

That Pacquiao chose to seek this fight AFTER negotiations with Terence Crawford fell through sums up all you need to know about the man. His desire to test himself against the best, even at 42, is one of the many reasons he is so admired and respected in boxing. But is it a step too far? Spence is in his prime and an inevitable move to 154 pounds is close. But what sticks out to me is how Spence struggled at times with the high pressure style of Shawn Porter. If Pacquiao can execute a high workrate for 12 rounds, then there's every chance he could take a decision. Thurman was a noted puncher and Manny absorbed them without trouble. Spence is going to have to establish his jab and try to get Pacquiao's respect early to set the tone. But for all Spence's qualities, I'm leaning with heart over head with this one. Logic favors Spence, but I'm going for the phenomenal Pac-Man to pull off a close win on points.

Dean Berks
Hertfordshire, U.K.

MARVELOUS MEMORIES

Today I entered Barnes & Noble, headed straight to the magazine section – with Ring in mind. Upon seeing Marvelous Marvin Hagler on the cover, I knew we'd lost yet another great, honorable champion. I had to go to another area of the bookstore to compose my emotions.

While he held the undisputed middleweight title in 1980-1987, Hagler was widely thought to be the champion following a controversial draw with Vito Antuofermo in 1979. For years, while ranked No. 1, he was overlooked for a title shot.

In 1983, I took my neighbor's 20-year-old son Tim to see Hagler vs. Duran on a giant screen set up in Veterans Coliseum, home of our Phoenix Suns. In the face of an overwhelmingly pro-Duran crowd, Tim, a Massachusetts native, stood and cheered his hero.

Hagler won a cautious fight. I suspect he respected Duran's craftiness, boxing skills and was careful of Duran's "suspect" tactics – a thumb in the eye of Davey Moore.

I'll never forget The Marvelous One taking Hearns' best shot, didn't stagger and came back to KO Hearns in three rounds.

I can't say if he got robbed vs. Leonard. I didn't see the fight. His reasons not to fight Leonard again were his own.

For seven years, Hagler did himself, boxing, the middleweight division and fans proud. Now, I suspect he's in the Big Boxing Ring in the Sky.

Kurtis C. Wolf
Glendale, Ariz.

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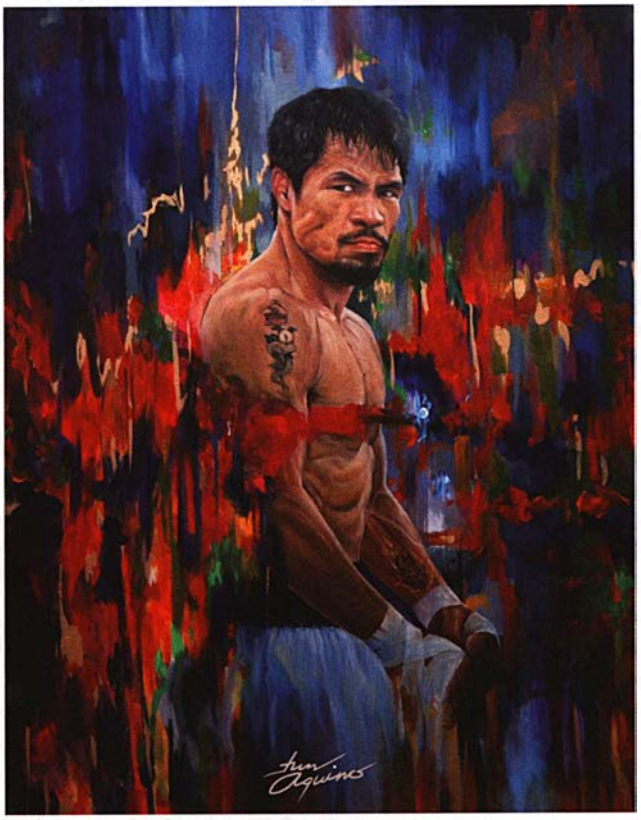
RINGSIDE BY DOUG FISCHER

PACQUIAO STILL DARES TO BE GREAT



Enjoy him while he's still here, because Pac-Man will be impossible to replace.

What can I say about Manny Pacquiao that wasn't chronicled in our special issue on the Filipino icon (November 2020) or hasn't already been written in the 20 years that followed his sensational U.S. debut on June 23, 2001?

I was on press row that night at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Pacquiao, an unheralded former flyweight titleholder, was a late substitute for Enrique Sanchez to challenge IBF 122-pound beltholder Lehlo Ledwaba on the HBO PPV-televised portion of the Oscar De La Hoya-Javier Castillejo undercard.

I wasn't shocked that Pacquiao upset the odds favorite with a one-sided sixth-round stoppage. I knew who he was (thanks to Ring Magazine) and I'd seen him work out at the Wild Card Boxing Club before he took the Ledwaba fight on two weeks' notice. I knew he was talented and hungry with a frenetic southpaw style that was the polar opposite of Sanchez's methodical brand of boxing, so poor Lehlo was in for a nasty surprise.

I'm not saying I called the upset, but I thought it was possible and I was definitely impressed. However, despite Pacquiao's explosive introduction to the American audience, I wasn't ready to crown him as the next great Filipino fighter.

Pacquiao was dynamic, he was must-see TV, but he was also raw. He couldn't be compared to Philippines-born Hall of Famers, such as Pancho Villa, Ceferino Garcia and Flash Elorde, and he had yet to eclipse more recent Filipino titleholders, such as Luisito Espinoza and Gerry Penalosa, in my view.

I picked against Pacquiao in his very next fight, which came against fellow 122-pound beltholder Agapito Sanchez in the co-featured bout to an HBO Championship Boxing telecast shared with future rival Floyd Mayweather Jr. on November 10, 2001, in San Francisco.

I was almost right. Sanchez, a rough Dominican boxer-brawler that I was familiar with from Forum Boxing shows in Southern California, landed

his share of jabs, right hands, low blows and headbutts to hold a bloody and frustrated Pacquiao to a six-round technical draw after the fight was stopped due to the Filipino's facial lacerations.

Pacquiao's limitations and technical flaws were exposed during the ugly, foul-filled stalemate, but so was his spirit. He wasn't great, he wasn't elite yet, he may not have even been the best junior featherweight at the time, but he dared to be. Going for a unification bout against a dangerous opponent immediately after getting his hands on a second world title let us know we were in for a hell of a ride with the Pac-Man.

It's hard to believe we're still on that ride 20 years later. Two years after scoring a split decision over Keith Thurman, Pacquiao is set to take on another undefeated welterweight – unified beltholder Errol Spence Jr. – on August 21. No tune-up. The 42-year-old senator with presidential aspirations is going straight to The Ring's No. 1-rated 147-pounder.

This is why you've got to love Manny. He takes the kind of risks that too many of the young guns of this era avoid. Pacquiao's got a history of doing it in back-to-back fights.

Just two years after struggling with Sanchez, he stepped up to featherweight to challenge Ring champ Marco Antonio Barrera. Pacquiao dominated the Mexican star to an 11th-round mercy stoppage and then took on unified beltholder Juan Manuel Marquez.

Most boxing insiders thought Pacquiao's May 2004 assignment was a recipe for disaster. Roach believed in his fighter, but despite Pacquiao's punching prowess, he knew Marquez's counterpunching style and tenacity could give his still-developing pupil hell, and that's exactly what happened after the Mexico City native got up from three knockdowns in the opening round.

It didn't matter to me that Pacquiao was held to another draw. Having cut my teeth covering Forum Boxing shows, I knew how good Marquez was. So did Naseem Hamed, who avoided the master technician. So did Erik Morales, who never faced his countryman. Barrera wouldn't share the ring with Marquez until 2007.

Going from a pound-for-pound player like Barrera to an avoided fighter like Marquez was akin to Thomas Hearns taking on Mike McCallum right after he blasted Roberto Duran in 1984. Not even The Hitman or his fellow Kings of the 1980s were eager to face The Bodysnatcher.

Pacquiao didn't discriminate. He battled fellow badasses like Morales, who handed him his first loss in the U.S. and made for a rousing trilogy in 2005-2006, and he faced stylistic spoilers, such as Marquez, Mayweather and Tim Bradley.

Pacquiao's willingness to face the best of his era as he climbed in weight made him a national hero and one of the highest-paid prizefighters in the world. Doing it in succession over a short time frame put Pacquiao in the all-time great conversation.

A five-bout win streak in 2008-2009 earned him back-to-back Ring Magazine Fighter-of-the-Year awards and clinched his selection as the Fighter of the Decade by the Boxing Writers Association of America. In this 24-month period, Pacquiao edged Marquez via split decision in a classic rematch, dominated lightweight standout David Diaz, retired Oscar De La Hoya, blitzed Ricky Hatton and wore down Miguel Cotto to a final-round stoppage. He won world titles in four weight classes, from junior lightweight to welterweight, during this stretch – the WBC/Ring 130-pound belts (vs. Marquez), the WBC lightweight title (vs. Diaz), the Ring 140-pound championship (vs. Hatton) and the WBO welterweight strap (vs. Cotto).

After the Cotto fight, HBO's Larry Merchant likened Pacquiao to Henry Armstrong, who is the prime example of the difference between a Hall of Famer and an all-time great. Armstrong is the latter. One way to prove it is to look at his amazing two-year run in 1937-1938. Armstrong collected the featherweight, welterweight and lightweight crowns while compiling an astounding 41-0 (36 KOs) record during this 24-month period. He beat fellow greats Barney Ross and Lou Ambers for the 147-pound and 135-pound titles in back-to-back fights, and he bested Hall of Famers Benny Bass, Chalky Wright and Baby Arizmendi, as well as future middleweight titleholder Ceferino Garcia, during this historic run that trumps what most Hall of Famers accomplished in their entire careers.

A couple years later, Sugar Ray Robinson, who turned pro in October 1940, would do his best to emulate Armstrong with a miraculous win streak over the first two full years of his pro career, 1941-1942. During this period, young Robinson compiled a 34-0 (24 KOs) record that includes two decisions over reigning lightweight champ Sammy Angott, a decision and 10-round stoppage of former welterweight champ Fritzie Zivic, two points wins over future welterweight champ Marty Servo and a decision over future middleweight champ Jake LaMotta.

The Sugar Ray of my era is also in this small club of special fighters who were able to fit Hall of Fame-worthy accomplishments into a 24-month span.

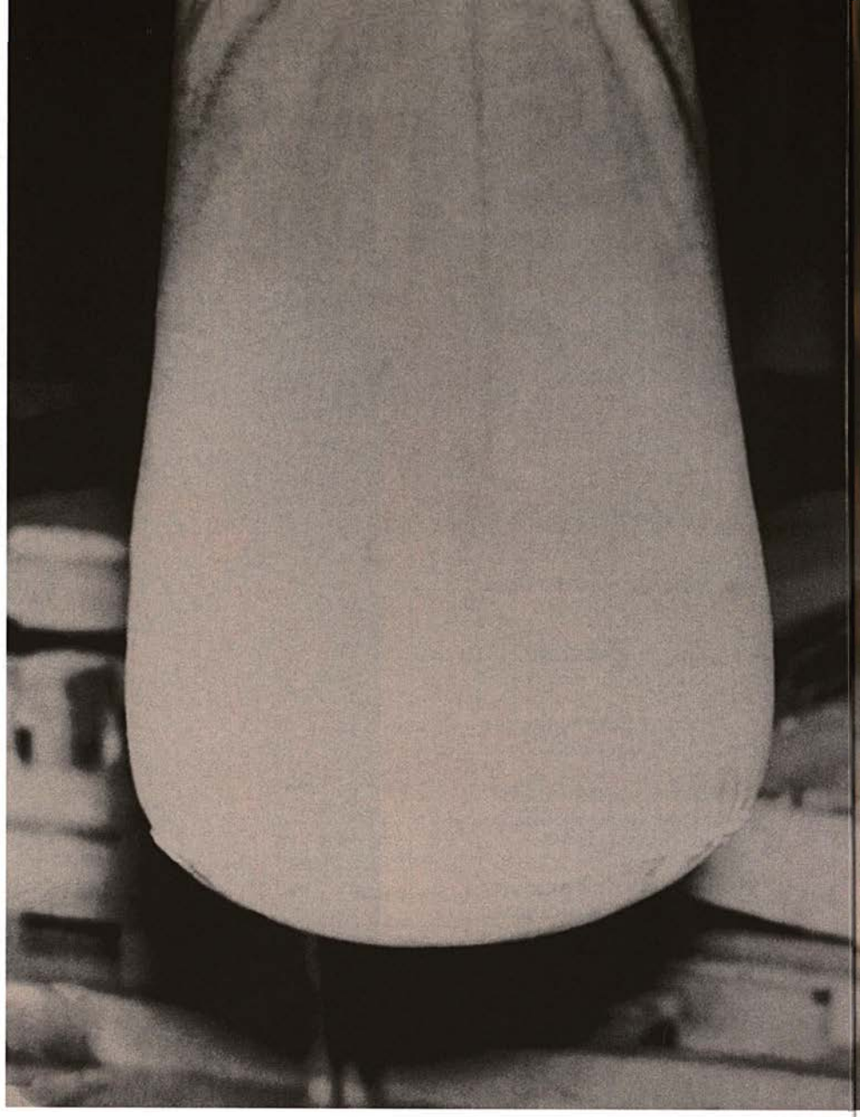
With his eight-bout run from September 1979 to September 1981, Ray Leonard won the WBC/Ring welterweight titles from unbeaten (38-0-1) Wilfred Benitez, split back-to-back bouts with the great Duran and won the epic showdown with Hearns for 147-pound supremacy. He also beat reigning 154-pound champ Ayub Kalule, top-rated welterweight contender Andy Price (in one round) and former title challenger Davey Green during this time frame.

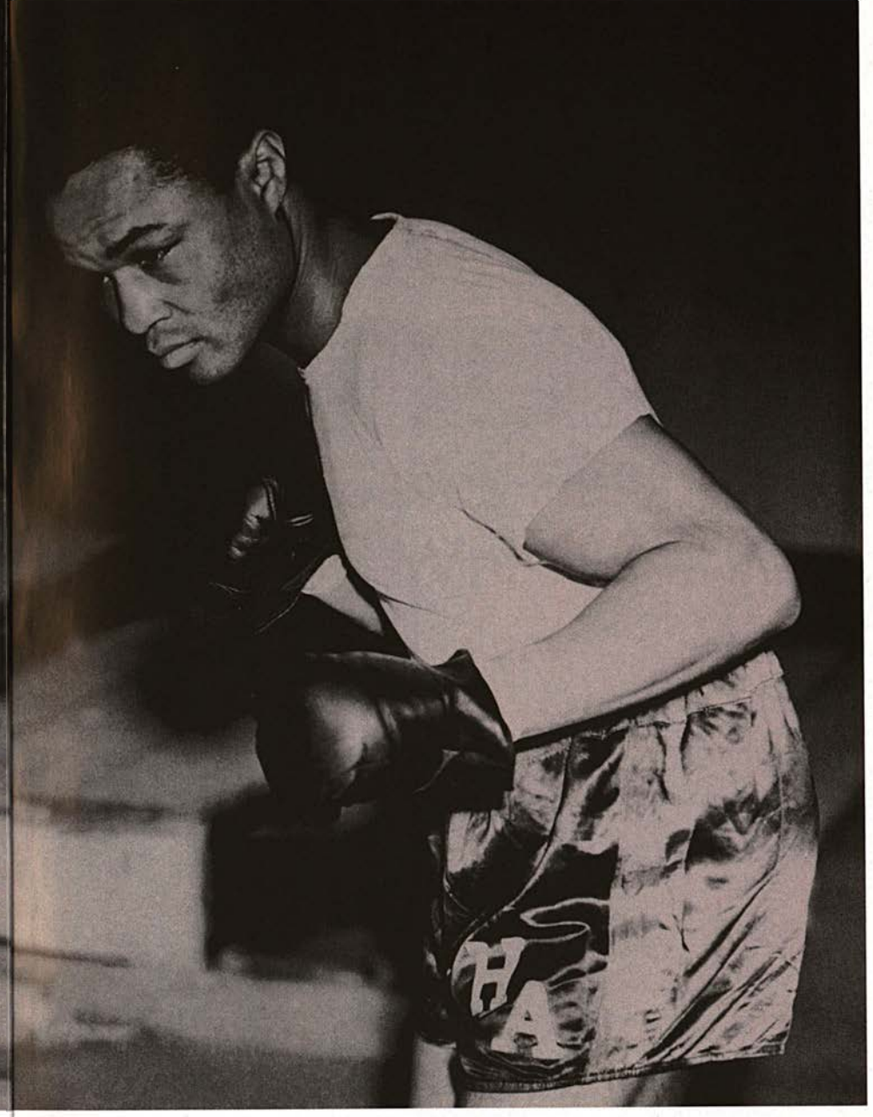
As great as Leonard was, he was a shell of his former self by his 40th pro bout. Pacquiao, who turned pro in January 1995, is still world class after 71 pro bouts and he still "wants that smoke," as the kids say, which is crazy because his legacy is untouchable, due in part to that streak in 2008-2009.

Nobody would fault him for avoiding "smoke." He could take a page from Mayweather's playbook and fight a YouTube celebrity. He could fight Logan Paul's dad and the PPV would do well. But Manny wants a real fight, a real risk.

If he beats Spence – and I won't count him out – I'll be comparing him to Archie Moore and Bernard Hopkins in my next column. I'll be debating his place among the top 10-20 greatest fighters of all time.

But for now, just daring to do it is a wonderful reminder of why he's so special.





All-time great Henry Armstrong held featherweight, lightweight and welterweight titles simultaneously.

PA IMAGES ARCHIVE

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

The great Donaire's signature left hook was as lethal as ever against Nordine Oubaali.

NONITO DONAIRE

In November 2019, four-weight world champion Nonito Donaire underlined his greatness with a warrior-like effort against Japanese power-puncher Naoya Inoue in Saitama, Japan. "The Filipino Flash" was the first fighter to inflict serious damage on "The Monster" – breaking his orbital bone, shaking him up and opening serious cuts on his eye and mouth – but he was floored in the penultimate round and lost a close unanimous decision. It would have been the perfect swan song, but Donaire had no intention of walking away. His elite-level performance against Inoue earned him a No. 1 spot with the WBC (as well as The Ring) at 118 pounds and he was therefore matched against French titleholder Nordine Oubaali. Oubaali turned professional following a brilliant amateur career, won a title in his 15th fight and made two successful defenses. At 34, he was also four years Donaire's junior and possessed a funky and potentially confusing southpaw style. Recipe for disaster, right? Wrong! At the Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson, California, Donaire decked his man with a signature left hook in the final minute of Round 3 and the impact could have been measured on the Richter scale. Oubaali rose gamely, but more ferocious left hands crashed home and the final one thrown in the session dropped him at the bell. For all intents and purposes, the fight was over, and Donaire closed out with a brutal three-punch salvo in Round 4. Oubaali had no idea what hit him. Donaire has been a professional for two full decades, and 20 of his 47 fights have been world title bouts. At 38 years old, he is still knocking over world-class opposition with his blockbuster left hook, and that very same shot is also keeping Father Time honest. Following his triumph, Donaire immediately expressed a desire to face Inoue in a rematch of their 2019 Fight of the Year. However, just days later, it was announced that the new titleholder would face WBO counterpart John Riel Casimero on August 14. Politics aside, the Donaire-Casimero winner would be in perfect position for an undisputed championship bout against Inoue, who recently devoured Michael Dasmarinas inside three rounds. RING

LAZARO 'EL REY' LORENZANA

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I GOT MY OWN BACK
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NEW FACES: JARED ANDERSON

By **Anson Wainwright**

AGE: 21
HOMETOWN: Toledo, Ohio
WEIGHT CLASS: heavyweight
HEIGHT/REACH: 6-foot-4 (193 cm) / 78½ inches (199 cm)
AMATEUR RECORD: 80-20 (roughly)
TURNED PRO: 2019
PRO RECORD: 9-0 (9 knockouts)
TRAINER: Daryl Riley
MANAGER: James Prince
PROMOTER: Top Rank
TWITTER: @TeamBigBabyy

BEST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: Anderson is most happy with his highlight-reel knockout of Kingsley Ibeh inside The Bubble at the MGM Grand in February.

"I showed I'm diverse, I can punch a little bit, I can box, I'm good on my back foot," Anderson told The Ring. "They put somebody in front of me and we had to knock him down."

Two-division titleholder Tim Bradley, who now serves as a commentator for ESPN, was also impressed with that performance.

"Ibeh was a dangerous guy," said Bradley. "[He] had underrated speed and power in both hands; he had a will to win. I thought it was going to be a big test, and Anderson passed with flying colors."

WORST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: Anderson has largely had things his own way, winning all of his first nine fights inside the distance. However, if he could do it over, he thinks he would've shown more patience against Johnnie Langston in June 2020.

"I would have boxed him more; I wouldn't have tried to bang with him and kill him," said Anderson, who wore Langston down with body shots and stopped him in the third round.

"I was anxious. Everybody was seeing how many knockouts I was getting; they wanted to see if I would go 4-0 with knockouts in the first round. I was trying too hard."

WHY HE'S A PROSPECT: Anderson has sparred with former WBO heavyweight titlist Joseph Parker as well as fellow up-and-comers Efe Ajagba and Tony Yoka. However, it is his work with Tyson Fury ahead of the rematch with Deontay Wilder that garnered buzz within the industry.

"It definitely was a good learning experience," said Anderson, who will be in camp with Fury ahead of the third fight with Wilder and is tentatively scheduled to open the pay-per-view. "[Fury] liked my work and he thought it helped him and made him sharper; that was my takeaway. I was grateful for the experience, and he gave me credit for helping him prepare for that fight."

Bradley has watched Anderson in person and sees considerable upside.

"As far as skills go, Jared can do anything," said Bradley. "He can switch from southpaw to orthodox. He also has really good punching power, he's a tremendous body puncher and he's a thinking fighter. He sets up his offense very, very well and of course behind a sharp, educated jab.

"I think his athleticism is what makes him a really good fighter. [He's] very light on his feet. I remember Andre Ward saying on the broadcast, 'He's a middleweight in a heavyweight body.' That's very true. Quick reflexes, great combination puncher.

"I've seen him grow not only with confidence but I also saw him grow inside the ring as far as showing a little bit more ability. I think this young man could be the next heavyweight champion for the next generation coming up. He has everything to be that guy."

WHY HE'S A SUSPECT: Anderson is a long way from a finished product, but time is on his side.

"Developing mentally outside the ring and getting comfortable with the business and the whole aspect of the game, that takes some time for fighters to get used to," said Bradley.

Bradley is less than impressed with Anderson's dietary habits and says he should get it under control sooner rather than later.

"He's still developing his body; he hasn't found a proper weight where he feels he is at his very best. … We've asked him several times, 'What's your walking-around weight? What's your fighting weight?' He's eating pizza after the weigh-ins. You don't eat pizza after the weigh-ins. There's no kind of nourishment. Eating a lot of cheese will slow you down inside the ring. Things like that, just maturing in that fashion and setting his camp up like a professional camp – the earlier you do that, the better it is for you in your career."

There are a few other questions Bradley would also like to see answered.

"We're unsure if he can take a big punch. Can he deal with adversity? If he's not having his way in a fight, can he turn the tide? Can he make the proper adjustments?"

STORYLINES: Anderson grew up in a big family; he is one of 10 children.

"It was like every other neighborhood," he said of his early years in Ohio. "There's problems; there's good things and bad things. It's not the best neighborhood, there's gang violence, but I was dedicated to what I wanted to do."

"Big Baby" was introduced to boxing when he was 8 years old. The sport kept him off the streets and gave him a focus. He has no particular boxing idol but looks up to the people from his neighborhood as role models. "[The] people I grew up with that I watched that helped mold me to who I am," he said proudly.

"It would mean everything to me, [to be heavyweight champion]. That's my goal."

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

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Former middleweight champs Jake LaMotta (left) and Rocky Graziano were the subjects of critically acclaimed Hollywood biopics.

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

ROCKY GRAZIANO AND *SOMEBODY UP THERE LIKES ME*

In 2003, I was at a fundraising dinner for Ring 8 (an organization that provides much-needed financial assistance for former boxers). Jake LaMotta was the scheduled guest of honor. He didn't show.

"Jake wanted to be paid five hundred dollars," Tony Mazzarella (the guiding force behind Ring 8) explained. "I told him that none of the other fighters had asked for money, so why should he be paid … Jake's not a nice guy," Mazzarella added.

That night, I was sitting at the same table as Norma Graziano. She was there to accept an honor on behalf of her late husband.

Rocky Graziano (named Thomas Rocco Barbella at birth) was born on January 1, 1919. He grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and was incarcerated several times before being drafted into the United States Army in 1942. While in the service, he punched an officer, went absent without leave and served 10 months in military prison before being dishonorably discharged.

In 10 years as a fighter, Graziano compiled a 67-10-6 record with 52 KOs and 3 KOs by. He was a ferocious puncher best known for three bloody wars with Tony Zale that were contested for the middleweight championship of the world. Rocky won the second of those encounters on a sixth-round knockout at Chicago Stadium on July 16, 1947. He died in 1990.

Norma Graziano was getting on in years when we met at the Ring 8 dinner. As the evening passed, she looked from time to time at an overhead television monitor that was showing black-and-white films of old fights, including Rocky in combat against Tony Zale.

"I can't bear to watch this," Norma said. "I hate to see Rocky get hit. In the beginning, I used to sit at ringside, but then it got too hard for me to watch. There were times when I felt like jumping into the ring to help him."

Norma was told that LaMotta might be at the dinner.

"I hope not," she responded. "Rocky and Jake were from the same era. We all came from the Lower East Side. Jake was a great fighter. Rocky and me, we both respected Jake as a fighter. But I don't like the man."

LaMotta became an iconic figure with the release of *Raging Bull* – the 1980 Academy Award-winning film based on his autobiography. But Graziano beat him to the punch. Rocky's autobiography – *Somebody Up There Likes Me* – was published in 1955 (15 years earlier than Jake's) and served as the basis for the 1956 feature film.

There have been many biopics about boxers. *Gentleman Jim* (1942), starring Errol Flynn as James Corbett, was one of the first. But *Gentleman Jim* was more fantasy than reality. By contrast, *Raging Bull* was a highly charged, dramatic recreation of LaMotta's life that bore the imprint of truth. *Somebody Up There Likes Me* was a bridge between the two.

James Dean had been slated to play Graziano. But he was killed in a car crash shortly before filming began, so an aspiring young actor named Paul Newman stepped into the role. Robert Wise (who later won Academy Awards for *West Side Story* and *The Sound of Music*) was the director. Norma was played by Pier Angeli, who had previously enjoyed a romantic relationship with Dean and been engaged to Kirk Douglas before marrying singer Vic Damone.

Somebody Up There Likes Me starts off as trite, but the drama builds over time. When Graziano steps into the ring to face Zale in their second encounter (the climactic scene in the movie), it's hard to not root for Rocky.

The young Paul Newman has a physicality about him, much like Marlon Brando as Terry Malloy in *On the Waterfront*. There's nothing suave in his portrayal of Graziano.

The best lines in the film are reserved for Rocky and Norma.

"I didn't marry a man, did I? I married a middleweight," Norma says at one point. In a particularly good scene, she asks Rocky, "What do you do to feel important?"

"You wanna know?" Rocky tells her. "Come and see me fight sometime. That's what makes me feel important. I mean, you gotta be

there. You got to hear them crowds screamin'. They're screamin' my name. And they're screamin' for me to kill off the other guy. They grab at me when I go up the aisle. That's what makes me feel important."

"I never liked the boxing world," Norma told me over dinner. "But to think that Paul Newman played Rocky ..."

★ ★ ★

Red Smith, one of the greatest sportswriters of the 20th century, wrote, "Sports is not really a play world. I think it's the real world. The people we're writing about in professional sports; they're suffering and living and dying and loving and trying to make their way through life just as the bricklayers and politicians are."

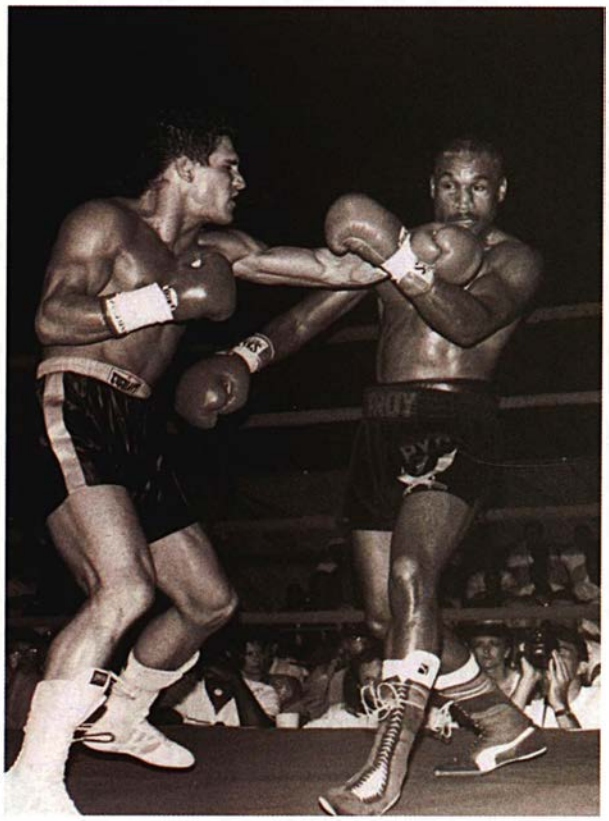
That's true. But there's also a "real world" for athletes beyond the playing field. And sometimes that world is ugly.

One of the first fight cards I went to after I started writing about boxing was at the Felt Forum at Madison Square Garden on October 4, 1984. A hot prospect named Troy Darrell knocked out an opponent named Pedro Estrada in the seventh round. It was a great fight with rousing back-and-forth action.

Estrada never fought again. Nor was he ever ranked in the top 10 by any of boxing's world sanctioning bodies. Instead, he found himself on the FBI's list of "Ten Most Wanted Suspects" and was imprisoned for participating in a drug-related triple homicide.

I remember being shaken when news of Estrada's circumstances broke. Fighters often come from places that are hard and violent. But the thought that, as a member of the media, I'd interacted with a man who was later actively involved in the shooting deaths of three people unsettled me.

I had that feeling again on May 6 when former Olympian Felix Verdejo was indicted in Puerto Rico on charges that he had kidnapped and murdered his mistress when she refused to have an abortion after becoming pregnant by him. More specifically, it's alleged that Verdejo punched Keishla Rodriguez in the face, injected her with a substance from a syringe, tied her arms and feet with wire, tied a heavy block to her body, threw her off a bridge into a lagoon and then shot at the body.



Pedro Estrada put up a good fight against Troy Dirrell but would soon find himself behind bars.

Verdejo, like all criminal defendants, is entitled to his day in court. But the evidence against him appears to be overwhelming.

Welcome to the real "real world."

★ ★ ★

***(Low)life* by Charles Farrell** (Hamilcar Publications) is described by its author as "a memoir of jazz, fight-fixing, and the mob." Among other things, Farrell (who was a fringe player in boxing in various capacities over the years) writes that he's happy to have fixed fights and wishes he'd done more of it.

Reading *(Low)life*, I couldn't escape the feeling that a lot of what I was reading was embellished if not outright fantasy. But one thing rang true to me:

"You can't be a part-time boxer," Farrell states. "And you can't be in the boxing business part-time. If you box and you're not in the gym every day doing the many things necessary to keep yourself sharp, you will lose and you will almost surely get badly hurt. If you are in the boxing business and are not in the gyms and on the phone and, nowadays, online all day, every day, you will get left behind, lose all your money, and almost surely get badly hurt. The commitment to box or to be in the boxing business precludes doing anything else. When I made my living in boxing, I worked fourteen-to-sixteen-hour days. I'd sleep for four hours a night, still ready to take any calls that came in during those hours. When I got out of boxing, I was instantly left behind. I still watch a lot of boxing. But there are people – even people who don't earn their living at it – who are much more up on what goes on in the sport than I'll ever again be."

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – Staredown: Another Year Inside Boxing – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism. In 2019, he was selected for boxing's highest honor - induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

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THE IRREPRESSIBLE GARETH DAVIES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WOJTEK URBANEK** • TEXT BY **THOMAS HAUSER**

THE FACE OF BOXING

Gareth Davies is flamboyant, theatrical, and has been known to push the boundaries of protocol. He's also one of the smartest, most knowledgeable, most respected voices in boxing.

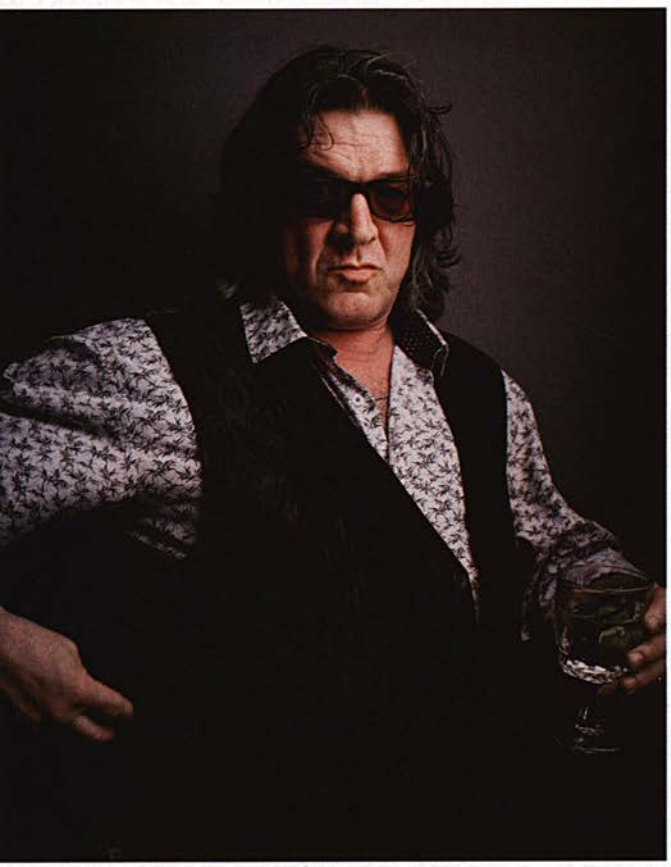
Davies has been active in the United Kingdom for three decades as a print journalist, television commentator, radio personality, documentary presenter, studio host and podcast creator. His primary platform is as a writer for The Telegraph. But he has also been featured in the U.K. on TalkSport, BT Sport and Setanta Sports. Fight fans in the United States are familiar with his work for Fox, ESPN, DAZN and The Ring.

The photos on these pages were taken at the most recent Boxing Writers Association of America dinner in New York. "Please tell your readers that I wasn't at my best that night," Gareth implores. "I'd had more than a few drinks."

That said, as noted above, Davies is one of the most respected members of the boxing media. And the respect goes both ways.

"It has been an honor to follow the careers of so many great athletes and other extraordinary personalities who make for some of the most fascinating stories on earth," Davies says. "These people take you on a journey that's raw and visceral inside the ring and enlightening and deeply human outside it. There is so much nuance in covering boxing. You need empathy to see much of it. And without empathy, you can't see through any of it. I find the whole tapestry of the sport to be fascinating. But it's a business; it will always be a business. And we can't forget that."

As for the role that boxing has played in his life, Davies explains, "It's more than a job. It's a lifestyle. The most memorable and exciting



times for me are the big fight weeks. I'm working for radio, television and the newspaper, catching up with old and new friends, spending long hours in media rooms. Each day, I'm surrounded by the most spectacular, creative, dramatic sport on earth. And the next day, it starts all over again. That's why I'm still doing this after 30 years."

"Boxing in the U.K. is healthier now than it has ever been," Davies says in closing. "We're blessed to be living in an era with protagonists in the heavyweight division like Tyson Fury, Anthony Joshua, Dillian Whyte, Joe Joyce and Daniel Dubois. I consider myself very lucky and privileged to be treated by people in the boxing industry as someone who belongs in boxing." RING

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RATINGS

SUMMARY ★ ANALYSIS

The Ring Ratings through fights of June 19, 2021

RECENT FIGHT RESULTS AND CHANGES IN THE RING'S DIVISIONAL RANKINGS BY BRIAN HARTY

HEAVYWEIGHT: Almost exactly 16 years after his first pro fight and probably well after hearing "He's still in the top 10?" got old, division mainstay Alexander Povetkin announced his retirement. With his final record standing at 36-3-1 (25 KOs), Povetkin's final 19 fights were all scheduled for 12 rounds and involved many of the 2010s' biggest big-man names, so it's understandable that the 41-year-old Russian mentioned "all kinds of injuries" as motivation to avoid the ring going forward. His departure created a space for Joe Joyce at No. 10.

Alexander Povetkin retired at 41.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: Badou Jack would've kept his place at No. 6 after a fourth-round stoppage of late substitution Dervin Colina, but the Swede and everyone below him gained a rank because Jean Pascal (No. 5) was removed after testing positive for four banned substances ahead of a promptly canceled fight on the Mayweather-Paul undercard. The shift made room for undefeated Brit Lyndon Arthur at No. 10.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT: On June 4, David Lemieux (No. 7) made short work of David Zegarra in Mexico while Fedor Chudinov (No. 9) won a unanimous decision over Ryno Liebenberg in Russia, with both winners holding their positions on the list.

MIDDLEWEIGHT: Jermall Charlo defended his title with a unanimous decision over Juan Macias Montiel (unrated), but the spread on the cards belied the effort put forth by the very game Montiel, who withstood every attack the Texan could come up with. Charlo remained at No. 2.

Jaime Munguia rose from No. 8 to No. 6 – and at least one member of the Ratings Panel thought he should move even higher – after a systematic pulverizing and sixth-round stoppage of unrated Kamil Szeremeta (though credit must be given to anyone who agrees to face Munguia on two weeks' notice).

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT: No. 1-rated Jarrett Hurd lost a middleweight fight by split decision to Luis Arias, but since the bout took place in Hurd's first foray at 160 pounds, the panelists decided to leave him alone at 154.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT: For several rounds, the Showtime-televised IBF eliminator between Batyrzhan Jukembayev (No. 8 last month) and Subriel Matias (unrated) was such a well-meshed style clash that it resembled a violent but very articulate conversation, often a literal tête-à-tête as the fighters joined foreheads and offered compact combinations in turn. Matias' use of the uppercut was especially productive, and the unrelenting volume of his offense (and power, as seen in a fourth-round knockdown) eventually caught up with Jukembayev, his corner pulling the plug before Round 9 could begin. The two men swapped places in the ratings, with Jukembayev falling out and Matias taking his place at No. 8.

Jose Pedraza made his way back into the ratings, replacing Robert Easter at No. 10, with an impressive eighth-round stoppage of Julian Rodriguez – the American's first loss in his 22 fights as a pro.

LIGHTWEIGHT: Up until the championship rounds of his title defense against No. 7-rated Jorge Linares, Devin Haney (No. 3) was collecting 10s with hands that were just as accurate but heavier than those of his opponent, and the veteran from Venezuela was looking a little ragged. Then, at the end of the 10th, Linares punctuated a combo with a straight right that had Haney doing the Charlie Chaplin walk back to his corner, and his feet still weren't quite landing where they were supposed to in the 11th. Haney survived the scare, finished the fight, won the decision and kept his place in the ratings, but the panel wasn't sure what to do with Linares. Some suggested dumping him, others demoting him a few notches and some just leaving him be. Choice No. 3 eventually prevailed, with one member pointing out that Linares, despite his checkered record, "keeps demonstrating that he is one or two punches away from scoring a major upset against top P4P opposition every time he steps into the ring."

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT: There's a ton of respect for No. 8-rated Shakur Stevenson expressed by all of the panelists every time he fights. All of them know how deep his well of talent goes, and some even think he's probably the best in the division. But as good as he looked in shutting out Jeremia Nakathila (unrated), the level of competition wasn't there to warrant a promotion.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT: One would like a comeback to be more emphatic, but Angelo Leo rebounded from losing his belt to Stephen Fulton with a hard-fought majority decision over Aaron Alameda and kept his spot at No. 5.

BANTAMWEIGHT: Nonito Donaire remained at No. 2 with his title-winning knockout of Nordine Oubaali, which you will find described in detail on other pages of this issue. Oubaali slipped from No. 2 to No. 4. Donaire's nemesis, Naoya Inoue, held onto his championship status with a third-round knockout of unrated Michael Dasmarinas, shredding the challenger's midsection with left hooks that eventually found the off switch on his liver.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT: With three huge right hands in Round 6 – the first a stunner, the second a knockdown and the third a finisher – Mexico's Esteban Bermudez (unrated) notched a substantial upset in knocking out No. 5-rated Carlos Canizales. Esteban, who was scheduled to go more than 12 rounds for only the second time in his career and is obscure enough to not even have a profile photo on BoxRec.com at press time, crashed into the ratings at No. 9 while Canizales, a longtime contender from Venezuela, fell all the way to No. 10.

P4P

1	**CANELO ALVAREZ**	Mexico • 56-1-2 (38 KOs)
2	**NAOYA INOUE**	Japan • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)
3	**TERENCE CRAWFORD**	U.S. • 37-0-0 (28 KOs)
4	**OLEKSANDR USYK**	Ukraine • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
5	**JOSH TAYLOR**	U.K. • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
6	**ERROL SPENCE JR.**	U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)
7	**TEOFIMO LOPEZ**	U.S. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
8	**JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**	Mexico • 42-3-0 (28 KOs)
9	**VASILIY LOMACHENKO**	Ukraine • 14-2-0 (10 KOs)
10	**KAZUTO IOKA**	Japan • 26-2-0 (15 KOs)

Naoya Inoue scored his second consecutive knockout on U.S. soil, halting the unheralded Michael Dasmarinas inside three rounds to maintain his No. 2 spot on the pound-for-pound list.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C	**TYSON FURY** RING, WBC	U.K. • 30-0-1 (21 KOs)
1	**ANTHONY JOSHUA** IBF, WBA, WBO	U.K. • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)
2	**DEONTAY WILDER**	U.S. • 42-1-1 (41 KOs)
3	**DILLIAN WHYTE**	U.K. • 28-2-0 (19 KOs)
4	**JOSEPH PARKER**	New Zealand • 29-2-0 (21 KOs)
5	**ANDY RUIZ JR.**	U.S. • 34-2-0 (22 KOs)
6	**LUIS ORTIZ**	Cuba • 32-2-0 (27 KOs)
7	**MICHAEL HUNTER**	U.S. • 19-1-1 (13 KOs)
8	**OSCAR RIVAS**	Colombia • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
9	**OLEKSANDR USYK**	Ukraine • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
10	**JOE JOYCE**	U.K. • 12-0-0 (11 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C	**MAIRIS BRIEDIS** RING, IBF	Latvia • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
1	**YUNIEL DORTICOS**	Cuba • 24-2-0 (22 KOs)
2	**ILUNGA MAKABU** WBC	Congo • 28-2-0 (25 KOs)
3	**LAWRENCE OKOLIE** WBO	U.K. • 16-0-0 (13 KOs)
4	**THABISO MCHUNU**	S. Africa • 23-5-0 (13 KOs)
5	**KEVIN LERENA**	S. Africa • 26-1-0 (13 KOs)
6	**ANDREW TABITI**	U.S. • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)
7	**ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN** WBA	France • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)
8	**KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**	Poland • 31-3-0 (19 KOs)
9	**ALEKSEI PAPIN**	Russia • 13-1-0 (12 KOs)
10	**MICHAL CIESLAK**	Poland • 21-1-0 (15 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C	**(VACANT)**	
1	**ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC	Russia • 16-0-0 (16 KOs)
2	**DMITRY BIVOL** WBA	Russia • 18-0-0 (11 KOs)
3	**JOE SMITH JR.**	U.S. • 27-3-0 (21 KOs)
4	**SERGEY KOVALEV**	Russia • 34-4-1 (29 KOs)
5	**BADOU JACK**	Sweden • 24-3-3 (14 KOs)
6	**ELEIDER ALVAREZ**	Colombia • 25-2-0 (13 KOs)
7	**MARCUS BROWNE**	U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
8	**UMAR SALAMOV**	Russia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)
9	**MAXIM VLASOV**	Russia • 45-4-0 (26 KOs)
10	**LYNDON ARTHUR**	U.K. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C	**CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, WBA, WBC, WBO	Mexico • 56-1-2 (38 KOs)
1	**DAVID BENAVIDEZ**	U.S. • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)
2	**CALEB PLANT** IBF	U.S. • 21-0-0 (12 KOs)
3	**CALLUM SMITH**	U.K. • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
4	**BILLY JOE SAUNDERS**	U.K. • 30-1-0 (14 KOs)
5	**ANTHONY DIRRELL**	U.S. • 33-2-2 (24 KOs)
6	**JOHN RYDER**	U.K. • 29-5-0 (16 KOs)
7	**DAVID LEMIEUX**	Canada • 43-4-0 (36 KOs)
8	**DANIEL JACOBS**	U.S. • 37-3-0 (30 KOs)
9	**FEDOR CHUDINOV**	Russia • 24-2-1 (16 KOs)
10	**CARLOS GONGORA**	Ecuador • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

- **C** (VACANT)
- **1** **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** IBF
  Kazakhstan • 41-1-1 (36 KOs)
- **2** **JERMALL CHARLO** WBC
  U.S. • 32-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **3** **DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** WBO
  U.S. • 30-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **4** **SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO**
  Ukraine • 13-3-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **RYOTA MURATA** WBA
  Japan • 16-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **6** **JAIME MUNGUIA**
  Mexico • 37-0-0 (30 KOs)
- **7** **CHRIS EUBANK JR.**
  U.K. • 30-2-0 (22 KOs)
- **8** **ROB BRANT**
  U.S. • 26-2-0 (18 KOs)
- **9** **ZHANIBEK ALIMKHANULY**
  Kazakhstan • 9-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **LIAM WILLIAMS**
  U.K. • 23-3-1 (18 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

- **C** **JERMELL CHARLO** RING, WBC, IBF, WBA
  U.S. • 34-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **1** **JARRETT HURD**
  U.S. • 24-2-0 (16 KOs)
- **2** **ERISLANDY LARA**
  Cuba • 28-3-3 (16 KOs)
- **3** **BRIAN CASTANO** WBO
  Argentina • 17-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **4** **JEISON ROSARIO**
  Dom. Rep. • 20-2-1 (14 KOs)
- **5** **JULIAN WILLIAMS**
  U.S. • 27-2-1 (16 KOs)
- **6** **ERICKSON LUBIN**
  U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **7** **TONY HARRISON**
  U.S. • 28-3-1 (21 KOs)
- **8** **TIM TSZYU**
  Australia • 18-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **9** **MICHEL SORO**
  France • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **10** **SEBASTIAN FUNDORA**
  U.S. • 17-0-1 (12 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

- **C** (VACANT)
- **1** **ERROL SPENCE JR.** IBF, WBC
  U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2** **TERENCE CRAWFORD** WBO
  U.S. • 37-0-0 (28 KOs)
- **3** **MANNY PACQUIAO**
  Phil. • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **4** **KEITH THURMAN**
  U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **5** **SHAWN PORTER**
  U.S. • 31-3-1 (17 KOs)
- **6** **YORDENIS UGAS** WBA
  Cuba • 26-4-0 (12 KOs)
- **7** **DANNY GARCIA**
  U.S. • 36-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **8** **JARON ENNIS**
  U.S. • 27-0-0 (25 KOs)
- **9** **KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV**
  Uzbekistan • 18-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **10** **VERGIL ORTIZ JR.**
  U.S. • 17-0-0 (17 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

- **C** **JOSH TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
  U.K. • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **1** **REGIS PROGRAIS**
  U.S. • 26-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **2** **JOSE RAMIREZ**
  U.S. • 26-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **3** **JOSE ZEPEDA**
  U.S. • 34-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **4** **VIKTOR POSTOL**
  Ukraine • 31-3-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **ARNOLD BARBOZA**
  U.S. • 25-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **6** **IVAN BARANCHYK**
  Russia • 20-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **7** **MARIO BARRIOS**
  U.S. • 26-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **8** **SUBRIEL MATIAS**
  Puerto Rico • 17-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **9** **SHOHJAHON ERGASHEV**
  Uzbekistan • 20-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **10** **JOSE PEDRAZA**
  Puerto Rico • 29-3-0 (14 KOs)

Badou Jack, rated No. 5 at light heavyweight, banked a routine fourth-round stoppage win over Dervin Colina.

Jermall Charlo is still No. 2 at middleweight following a tougher than expected points win over Mexican Juan Montiel.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

- **C** **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** RING, WBA, WBO, IBF
  U.S. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **1** **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
  Ukraine • 14-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **RYAN GARCIA**
  U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **DEVIN HANEY** WBC
  U.S. • 26-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **4** **RICHARD COMMEY**
  Ghana • 30-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **5** **LUKE CAMPBELL**
  U.K. • 20-4-0 (16 KOs)
- **6** **JAVIER FORTUNA**
  Dom. Rep. • 36-2-1 (25 KOs)
- **7** **JORGE LINARES**
  Venezuela • 47-6-0 (29 KOs)
- **8** **GEORGE KAMBOSOS JR.**
  Australia • 19-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **9** **MASAYOSHI NAKATANI**
  Japan • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **10** **ISAAC CRUZ**
  Mexico • 22-1-1 (15 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

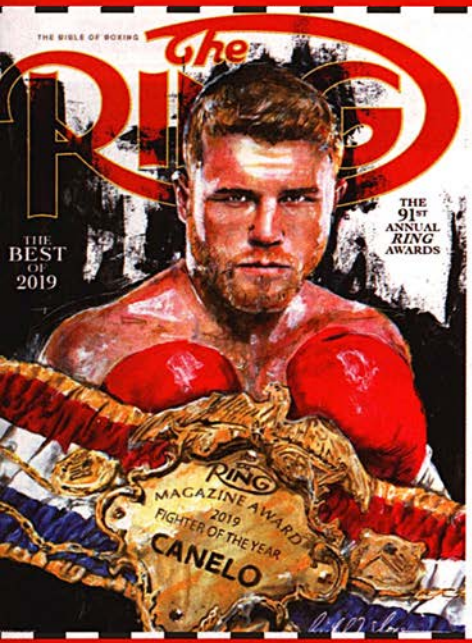
- **C** (VACANT)
- **1** **GERVONTA DAVIS** WBA
  U.S. • 24-0-0 (23 KOs)
- **2** **OSCAR VALDEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 29-0-0 (23 KOs)
- **3** **JAMEL HERRING** WBO
  U.S. • 23-2-0 (11 KOs)
- **4** **JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** IBF
  U.S. • 31-1-1 (15 KOs)
- **5** **MIGUEL BERCHELT**
  Mexico • 37-2-0 (33 KOs)
- **6** **TEVIN FARMER**
  U.S. • 30-5-1 (6 KOs)
- **7** **SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV**
  Russia • 15-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **8** **SHAKUR STEVENSON**
  U.S. • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **9** **CHRIS COLBERT**
  U.S. • 15-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **10** **ROGER GUTIERREZ**
  Venezuela • 25-3-1 (20 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

- **C** (VACANT)
- **1** **GARY RUSSELL JR.** WBC
  U.S. • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **2** **EMANUEL NAVARRETE** WBO
  Mexico • 33-1-0 (28 KOs)
- **3** **XU CAN**
  China • 18-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **4** **KID GALAHAD**
  U.K. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **MAURICIO LARA**
  Mexico • 22-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **6** **JOSH WARRINGTON**
  U.K. • 30-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **7** **MARK MAGSAYO**
  Phil. • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **8** **TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR**
  Mongolia • 12-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **JESSIE MAGDALENO**
  U.S. • 28-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **10** **JOET GONZALEZ**
  U.S. • 24-1-0 (14 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

- **C** (VACANT)
- **1** **MURODJON AKHMADALIEV** IBF, WBA
  Uzbekistan • 9-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2** **DANIEL ROMAN**
  U.S. • 29-3-1 (10 KOs)
- **3** **STEPHEN FULTON** WBO
  U.S. • 19-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **4** **BRANDON FIGUEROA** WBC
  U.S. • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **5** **ANGELO LEO**
  U.S. • 21-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **6** **HIROAKI TESHIGAWARA**
  Japan • 22-2-2 (15 KOs)
- **7** **RAEESE ALEEM**
  U.S. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **8** **AZAT HOVHANNISYAN**
  Armenia • 19-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **9** **RONNY RIOS**
  U.S. • 33-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **10** **RYOSUKE IWASA**
  Japan • 27-4-0 (17 KOs)



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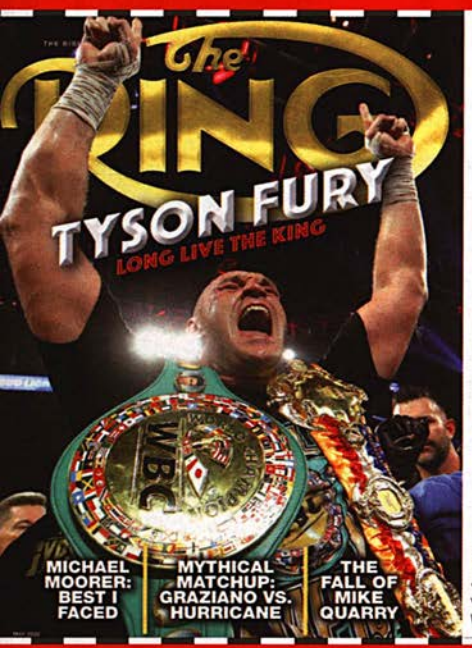

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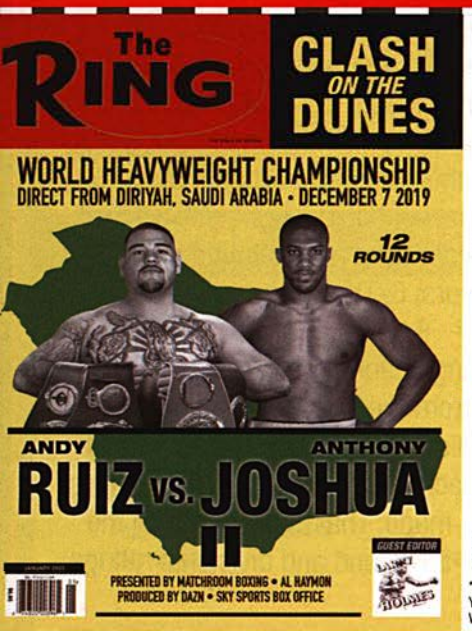

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RATINGS

Through fights of June 19, 2021

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **NAOYA INOUE** RING, IBF, WBA
  Japan • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **1** **NONITO DONAIRE** WBC
  Phil. • 41-6-0 (27 KOs)
- **2** **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** WBO
  Philippines • 30-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **3** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  Puerto Rico • 19-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **NORDINE OUBAALI**
  France • 17-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **ZOLANI TETE**
  S. Africa • 28-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **TAKUMA INOUE**
  Japan • 14-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **7** **JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-2-0 (18 KOs)
- **8** **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
  Cuba • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **9** **MIKE PLANIA**
  Philippines • 25-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **GARY ANTONIO RUSSELL**
  U.S. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBA, WBC
  Mexico • 42-3-0 (28 KOs)
- **1** **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 50-5-1 (43 KOs)
- **2** **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
  Nicaragua • 50-3-0 (41 KOs)
- **3** **KAZUTO IOKA** WBO
  Japan • 26-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **4** **JERWIN ANCAJAS** IBF
  Phil. • 33-1-2 (22 KOs)
- **5** **KHALID YAFAI**
  U.K. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **6** **JOSHUA FRANCO**
  U.S. • 17-1-2 (8 KOs)
- **7** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 34-4-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **9** **JEYVIER CINTRON**
  Puerto Rico • 11-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **CARLOS CUADRAS**
  Mexico • 39-4-1 (27 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **2** **SUNNY EDWARDS** IBF
  U.K. • 16-0-0 (4 KOs)
- **3** **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA
  Ukraine • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **4** **JUNTO NAKATANI** WBO
  Japan • 21-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **MORUTI MTHALANE**
  S. Africa • 39-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **6** **MASAYUKI KURODA**
  Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)
- **7** **CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 31-5-0 (21 KOs)
- **8** **JAY HARRIS**
  U.K. • 18-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **ANGEL ACOSTA**
  Puerto Rico • 22-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **10** **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
  Puerto Rico • 21-4-0 (16 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** RING, WBA
  Japan • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **1** **KENSHIRO TERAJI** WBC
  Japan • 18-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **FELIX ALVARADO** IBF
  Nicaragua • 36-2-0 (31 KOs)
- **3** **ELWIN SOTO** WBO
  Mexico • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 33-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **EDWARD HENO**
  Phil. • 14-1-5 (5 KOs)
- **6** **SHO KIMURA**
  Japan • 19-3-2 (12 KOs)
- **7** **AGUSTIN GAUTO**
  Argentina • 16-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **8** **JESSE RODRIGUEZ**
  U.S. • 13-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **ESTEBAN BERMUDEZ**
  Mexico • 14-3-2 (10 KOs)
- **10** **CARLOS CANIZALES**
  Venezuela • 22-1-1 (17 KOs)

Jaime Munguia (right) impressed the Ratings Panel with his six-round dismantling of Kamil Szeremeta.

In an upset, Jarrett Hurd (left) was outpointed by Luis Arias at middleweight, above Hurd's comfort zone of 154 pounds.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA
  Thailand • 21-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2** **PETCHMANEE CP FRESHMART** WBC
  Thailand • 36-1-0 (23 KOs)
- **3** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
  Thailand • 54-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **4** **WILFREDO MENDEZ** WBO
  Puerto Rico • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **5** **BYRON ROJAS**
  Nicaragua • 27-4-3 (11 KOs)
- **6** **VIC SALUDAR**
  Phil. • 21-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **7** **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
  Mexico • 24-4-1 (15 KOs)
- **8** **SIMPIWE KONKCO**
  S. Africa • 19-6-0 (7 KOs)
- **9** **RENE MARK CUARTO** IBF
  Phil. • 19-2-2 (11 KOs)
- **10** **PEDRO TADURAN**
  Phil. • 14-3-1 (11 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

WOMEN'S RATINGS

Through fights of June 19, 2021

POUND FOR POUND

1 **KATIE TAYLOR**
Ireland • 18-0-0 (6 KOs)

2 **CLARESSA SHIELDS**
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)

3 **AMANDA SERRANO**
Puerto Rico • 40-1-1 (30 KOs)

4 **JESSICA MCCASKILL**
U.S. • 10-2-0 (3 KOs)

5 **DELFINE PERSOON**
Belgium • 44-3-0 (18 KOs)

6 **YESICA BOPP**
Argentina • 36-1-0 (16 KOs)

7 **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
Norway • 36-2-0 (9 KOs)

8 **MIKAELA MAYER**
U.S. • 15-0-0 (5 KOs)

9 **CHANTELLE CAMERON**
U.K. • 14-0-0 (8 KOs)

10 **SENIESA ESTRADA**
U.S. • 20-0-0 (8 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **ELIN CEDERROOS** IBF, WBA
Sweden • 8-0-0 (4 KOs)
2 **FRANCHON CREWS-DEZURN** WBC, WBO
U.S. • 7-1-0 (2 KOs)
3 **ALICIA NAPOLEON ESPINOSA**
U.S. • 12-2-0 (7 KOs)
4 **EMA KOZIN**
Slovenia • 21-0-1 (11 KOs)
5 **SAVANNAH MARSHALL**
U.K. • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHT
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

C **CLARESSA SHIELDS** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)
1 **SAVANNAH MARSHALL**
U.K. • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **CHRISTINA HAMMER**
Germany • 26-1-0 (12 KOs)
3 **TORI NELSON**
U.S. • 20-2-3 (4 KOs)
4 **TAYLA HARRIS**
Australia • 7-0-1 (3 KOs)
5 **EMA KOZIN**
Slovenia • 21-0-1 (11 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

C **CLARESSA SHIELDS** RING, WBC, WBO, IBF
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)
1 **MARIE EVE DICAIRE**
Canada • 17-1-0 (0 KOs)
2 **HANNA GABRIELS** WBA
Costa Rica • 21-2-1 (12 KOs)
3 **MIKAELA LAUREN**
Sweden • 32-6-0 (13 KOs)
4 **CHRIS NAMUS**
Uruguay • 25-6-0 (8 KOs)
5 **PATRICIA BERGHULT**
Sweden • 14-0-0 (3 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

C **JESSICA MCCASKILL** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.S. • 10-2-0 (3 KOs)
1 **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
Norway • 36-2-0 (9 KOs)
2 **LAYLA MCCARTER**
U.S. • 44-13-5 (11 KOs)
3 **ORNELLA DOMINI**
Switzerland • 15-2-0 (3 KOs)
4 **VICTORIA BUSTOS**
Argentina • 21-6-0 (0 KOs)
5 **LOLITA MUZEYA**
Zambia • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **CHRISTINA LINARDATOU** WBO
Greece • 13-2-0 (6 KOs)
2 **MARY MCGEE** IBF
U.S. • 27-3-0 (15 KOs)
3 **CHANTELLE CAMERON** WBC
U.K. • 14-0-0 (8 KOs)
4 **ERICA FARIAS**
Argentina • 26-4-0 (10 KOs)
5 **KALI REIS** WBA
U.S. • 17-7-1 (5 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

C **KATIE TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
Ireland • 18-0-0 (6 KOs)
1 **DELFINE PERSOON**
Belgium • 44-3-0 (18 KOs)
2 **CHANTELLE CAMERON**
U.K. • 14-0-0 (8 KOs)
3 **ESTELLE MOSSELY**
Belgium • 9-0-0 (1 KOs)
4 **MIRIAM GUTIERREZ**
Spain • 13-1-0 (5 KOs)
5 **NATASHA JONAS**
U.K. • 9-2-1 (7 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **MIKAELA MAYER** WBO
U.S. • 15-0-0 (5 KOs)
2 **TERRI HARPER** WBC
U.K. • 11-0-1 (6 KOs)
3 **MAIVA HAMADOUCHE** IBF
France • 22-1-0 (18 KOs)
4 **HYUN MI CHOI** WBA
South Korea • 18-0-1 (4 KOs)
5 **EWA BRODNICKA**
Poland • 20-1-0 (2 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **AMANDA SERRANO** WBC, WBO
Puerto Rico • 40-1-1 (30 KOs)
2 **SARAH MAHFOUD**
Denmark • 10-0-0 (3 KOs)
3 **ERIKA CRUZ HERNANDEZ** WBA
Mexico • 13-1-0 (3 KOs)
4 **JELENA MRDJENOVICH**
Canada • 41-11-2 (19 KOs)
5 **NINA MEINKE**
Germany • 12-2-0 (3 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **JACKIE NAVA**
Mexico • 37-4-4 (16 KOs)
2 **MARCELA ACUNA** IBF
Argentina • 49-7-2 (20 KOs)
3 **DANIELA BERMUDEZ** IBF
Argentina • 29-4-3 (10 KOs)
4 **MAYERLIN RIVAS** WBA
Venezuela • 16-4-2 (10 KOs)
5 **DINA THORSLUND** WBO
Denmark • 15-0-0 (6 KOs)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **ZULINA MUNOZ**
Mexico • 53-3-2 (30 KOs)
2 **YULIHAN LUNA AVILA** WBC
Mexico • 21-3-1 (3 KOs)
3 **MARIANA JUAREZ**
Mexico • 55-10-4 (19 KOs)
4 **MARIA CECILIA ROMAN** IBF
Argentina • 15-5-1 (0 KOs)
5 **SHANNON COURTENAY** WBA
U.K. • 7-1-0 (3 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **LOURDES JUAREZ** WBC
Mexico • 31-2-0 (4 KOs)
2 **GUADALUPE MARTINEZ**
Mexico • 20-10-0 (6 KOs)
3 **JESSICA CHAVEZ**
Mexico • 31-5-3 (4 KOs)
4 **DIANA FERNANDEZ**
Mexico • 23-3-0 (4 KOs)
5 **ESMERALDA MORENO**
Mexico • 35-12-2 (11 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **NAOKO FUJIOKA** WBA
Japan • 18-2-1 (7 KOs)
2 **ARELY MUCINO** WBO
Mexico • 29-3-2 (10 KOs)
3 **AVA KNIGHT**
U.S. • 19-2-5 (5 KOs)
4 **MARLEN ESPARZA**
U.S. • 10-1-0 (1 KOs) WBC
5 **IBETH ZAMORA**
Mexico • 32-7-0 (12 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **YESICA BOPP** WBA
Argentina • 36-1-0 (16 KOs)
2 **KENIA ENRIQUEZ**
Mexico • 23-1-0 (9 KOs)
3 **TSUNAMI TENKAI** WBO
Japan • 28-12-1 (16 KOs)
4 **EVELYN BERMUDEZ** IBF
Argentina • 13-0-1 (3 KOs)
5 **KIM CLAVEL**
Canada • 13-0-0 (2 KOs)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **SENIESA ESTRADA** WBA
U.S. • 20-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **CHRISTINA RUPPRECHT** WBC
Germany • 10-0-1 (3 KOs)
3 **YOKASTA VALLE** IBF
Nicaragua • 21-2-0 (9 KOs)
4 **ANABEL ORTIZ**
Mexico • 31-4-0 (4 KOs)
5 **ETSUKO TADA** WBO
Japan • 20-3-3 (7 KOs)

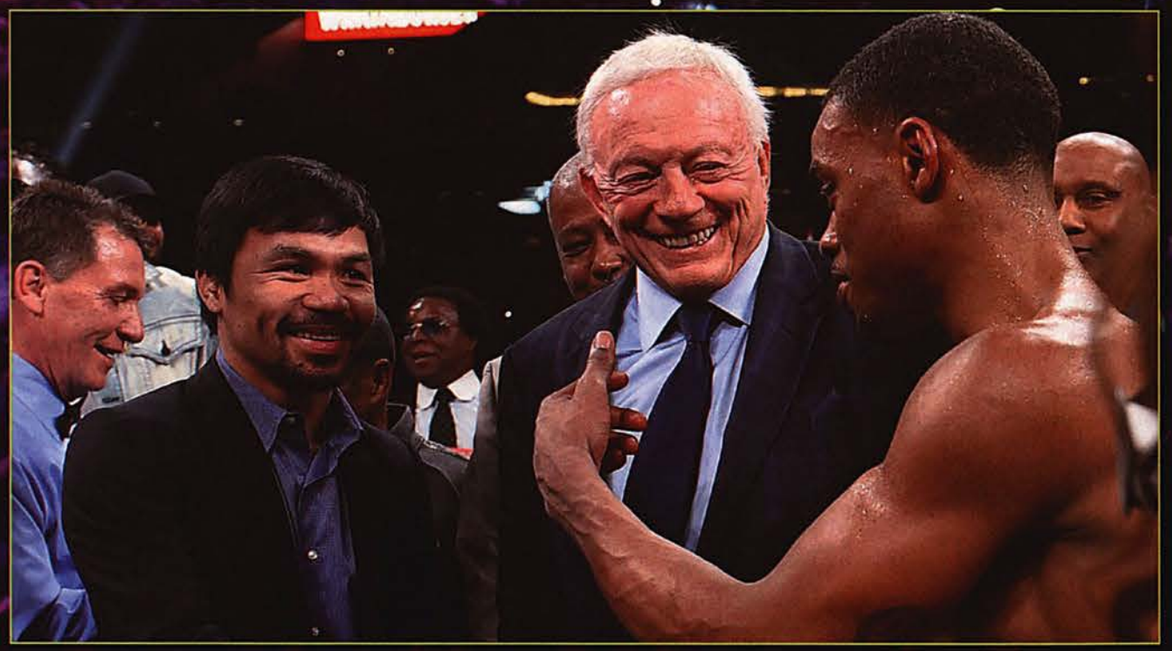
ATOMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 102 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **MONSERRAT ALARCON** WBA
Mexico • 15-4-2 (0 KOs)
2 **FABIANA BYTYQI** WBC
Czech Rep. • 17-0-1 (5 KOs)
3 **MIKA IWAKAWA** WBO
Japan • 10-5-1 (3 KOs)
4 **NAO IKEYAMA**
Japan • 18-6-4 (5 KOs)
5 **ERI MATSUDA**
Japan • 4-0-1 (1 KO)

BEYOND BELIEF

AT 42 AND AGAINST THE ODDS, THE AMAZING **MANNY PACQUIAO** IS HEADING INTO BATTLE WITH ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS FIGHTERS IN THE WORLD, **ERROL SPENCE JR.**, AND HE WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY

By **Ron Borges**



Spence has been seeking a superfight with Pacquiao for years and finally got his wish.

STEWART COOK

Once, over 40 years ago, broadcaster Al Michaels asked an American television audience "Do you believe in miracles?" after the United States Olympic hockey team had ousted the heavily-favored Russians to reach the gold medal finals. Come August 21, 42-year-old Manny Pacquiao is ready to ask himself, the boxing world and unified welterweight titleholder Errol Spence Jr. the same question.

Never one to fear an opponent or avoid a challenge, the full-time Filipino politician and part-time world-class boxer has chosen that night to challenge both

Pacquiao rolled back the years in a points win over Keith Thurman.

STEWART COOK/FOX SPORTS/PICTUREGROUP

the calendar and an opponent considered by many to be the best welterweight in the world. To date, both Spence and Father Time are undefeated.

Pacquiao is not unaware of those realities. He just doesn't spend time worrying about them. Throughout a 26-year career, Pacquiao has made a different choice when it comes to worrying. He worries about himself, believing if he does so and then prepares properly, that worry will become his opponent's worry on fight night.

"He doesn't concern himself with his opponent," said Sean Gibbons, who is president of Pacquiao's promotional company. "He doesn't study tape. He is so confident in who he is and what he can do. He focuses on himself."

That has worked brilliantly throughout a career in which Pacquiao has won titles in a record eight weight divisions, but time is a relentless opponent. It stalks all fighters, regardless of their abilities, and eventually erodes their skills. Will the passage of time be enough for the 31-year-old Spence to elevate his resume at the expense of one of the greatest fighters of all time? Will Spence's size, reach and speed be the issues that overcome Pacquiao even more than the weight of time? These are questions to which no one knows the answer. But this much is certain: Spence was 5 years old when Pacquiao made his pro debut and 8 when the future superstar won his first world title on December 4, 1998. If Pacquiao beats Spence, he will emerge as one of the half dozen or so greatest fighters of all time, despite his loss six years ago to Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Pacquiao was 36 at the time of that defeat and already considered past his prime. He faced Mayweather with an injured right shoulder that required immediate reconstructive surgery and was never really in the fight. Pacquiao was 3-3 in his last six fights following the Mayweather loss, so there was little reason to think that his future was inside a boxing ring. Yet since then, Pacquiao has reminded everyone that underestimating his skill and his will is a fool's errand.

Pacquiao has gone 5-1 as a part-time fighter and full-time senator in the Philippine Congress since Mayweather outboxed him, beating Tim Bradley, Jessie Vargas, Lucas Matthysse, four-division beltholder Adrien Broner and then undefeated WBA welterweight titleholder Keith Thurman, whom he dropped in the opening round with a startlingly fast attack that left Thurman physically and mentally overwhelmed. The only blemish in that run was a controversial decision loss to Jeff Horn in Australia.

Yet in Spence, Pacquiao is facing his sternest test since squaring off with Mayweather, and it is one he had no pressing need to accept. He lives in regal circumstances back home in the Philippines, where present Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte recently included Pacquiao's name on a short list of potential successors to rule the country. Normally, great fighters in their 40s who return to the ring after a two-year layoff do so because finances compel it. That is not the case with Pacquiao. What has driven him to take on what many believe is too big a challenge at this late juncture of his career is the same thing that made him a world champion in all those weight divisions.

"Manny Pacquiao is the Tom Brady of boxing," Bradley said after the fight was announced. "He wants to fight the best. You've got to respect that. If he can't fight the best, he doesn't want to be involved."

Pacquiao, unlike Mayweather, Mike Tyson, Roy Jones and others of late, has no interest in boxing in a clown show. He wants no part of an "exhibition" match against social media influencers like Logan Paul or in participating in the fistic equivalent of the Senior Tour like Tyson, Jones and others, who have begun trading on nostalgia and unspoken peace treaties rather than boxing skills while selling the illusion they are turning back the clock.

Pacquiao is not in the nostalgia business. He remains what he has always been, a seeker of the best competition. In the welterweight division, that is represented by two fighters, Spence and Terence Crawford. The word in boxing was that Pacquiao's representatives first began to negotiate with Crawford but were unable to agree on terms or the venue and so turned to Spence, and a deal was arrived at so quickly it came as a shock to the boxing world, even though Pacquiao first hinted at his interest in such a fight two years ago after Spence dusted four-division titleholder Mikey Garcia.

"Yeah, why not?" Pacquiao said while standing next to Spence after the Garcia fight. "We'll give the fans a good fight."

One has to wonder if that is still the case, because it will be 25 months since Pacquiao last fought when he slips between the ropes to face the IBF/WBC titleholder in Las Vegas. Already facing distinct physical disadvantages against the naturally larger Spence, a long layoff would not generally be seen as the best way to prepare for such a highly esteemed champion in the prime of his career, but Pacquiao (62-7-2, 39 KOs) is something kind of different in every way when it comes to his view of facing world-class fighters.

"Manny is taking a huge risk here," said Hall of Fame trainer and broadcaster Teddy Atlas. "He's got to deal with a relentless southpaw who's going to put pressure on him. You wouldn't think taking two years off improves his chances of dealing with that.

"It doesn't seem like a good idea for Manny, but you know what? That's part of the magic of Manny. He turns a lot of things that don't seem like good ideas into good ideas. That's what great ones do. Maybe inactivity works in reverse for a guy with as many miles on the odometer as Manny. Maybe it's like hibernation. Maybe it's a good thing. We're going to see."

While Spence weighed 149 pounds when he turned pro nine years ago and thus had to pare two pounds off to become a welterweight in the first place, Pacquiao weighed only 106 pounds in his pro debut in 1995 (and had to fill his pockets with rocks before the weigh-in to exceed the 100-pound minimum to be allowed to fight). Although Pacquiao has grown heavier and stronger in the 26 years since, there remains no question that the naturally larger man is Spence.

Pacquiao is accustomed to

such problems, of course, and generally has overcome them. Yet the fact remains that he's a small welterweight and has never weighed in heavier than 147 pounds, even though he won the vacant WBC 154-pound title 11 years ago by defeating Antonio Margarito at a catchweight of 150 (while he weighed in well below the welterweight limit at 144½ pounds).

The night of the fight, both weighed in again with Pacquiao at 147 and Margarito at 165. The extra tonnage couldn't save Margarito from a one-sided beating in which he lost nearly every round because he could not cope with Pacquiao's hand speed, quick feet and offensive explosiveness.

Spence (27-0, 21 KOs) will have to find ways to adapt to the same factors, because as Thurman found out in the first round of his fight with Pacquiao, the old man is faster and more powerful than you expect. And if you don't quickly adjust, you're in for a long night.

"Manny is one of the fastest fighters you're ever going to see," says Atlas, who prepared Bradley for his third fight with Pacquiao, so he got to experience the problem first-hand. "Maybe his speed isn't what it used to be, but his ability to go in and out and move laterally is what makes him so difficult to fight.

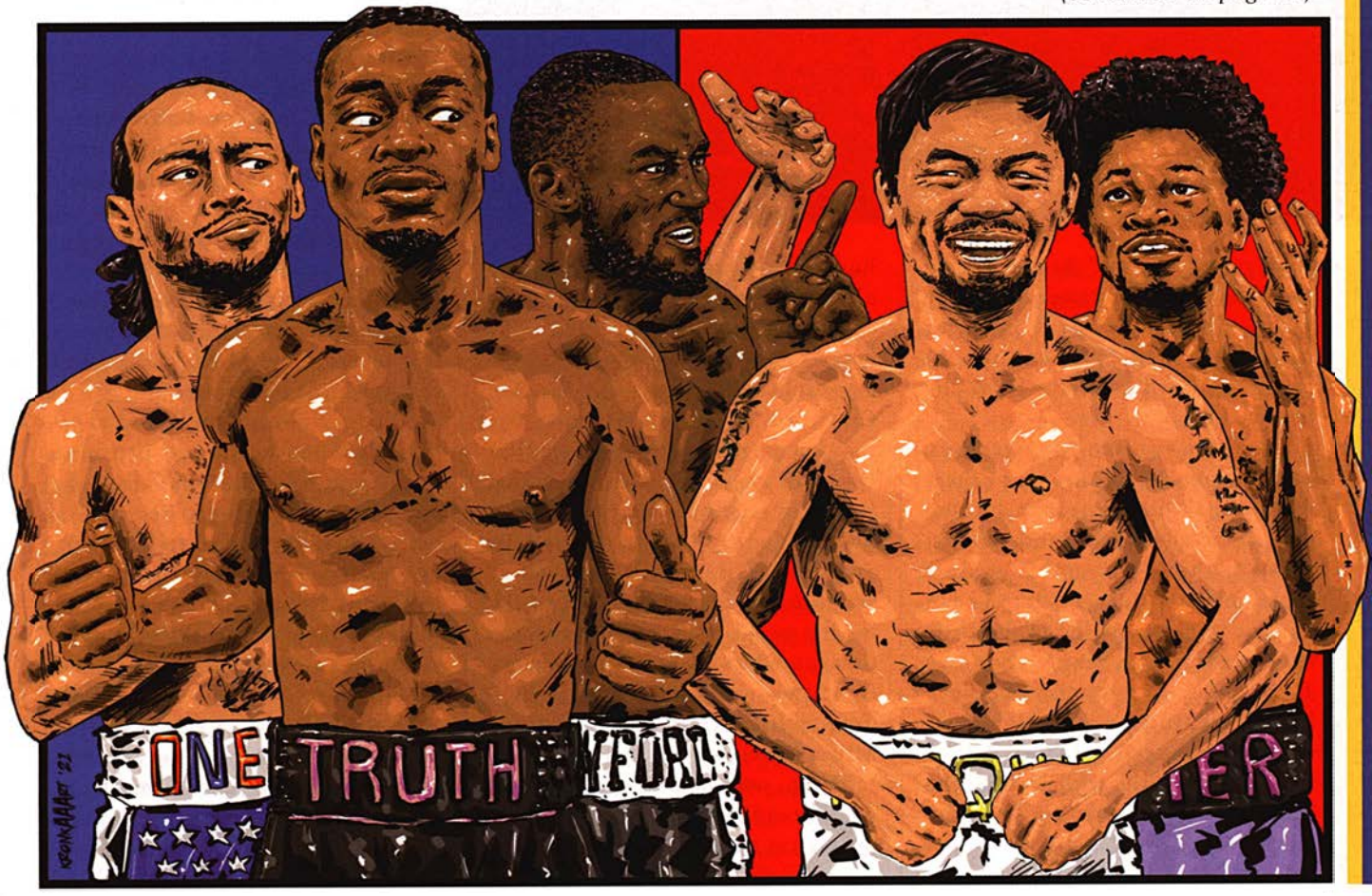
"I don't know if he can still depend on those wheels anymore, but he's going to need them. He's going to need to give Spence angles and he's going to need those quick hands. At some point, he's going to have to hurt Spence to slow him down. Manny has to land something that makes him blink and makes him think."

Many will argue Pacquiao no longer fully possesses enough of those gifts of speed and agility to overwhelm Spence, his fast-twitch muscles having been slowed a bit by time, but he showed no signs of having faded the night he beat Thurman. How will two years of trading boxing for political infighting affect him? That is this fight's biggest question.

"Age is a concern," Gibbons admitted. "The wheels could fall off the cart. But we haven't seen it yet. The speed is there. The footwork is there. The confidence remains. The reality is Manny is an anomaly who comes around once in a generation. These guys like Spence and Thurman are good fighters. Manny is a great fighter."

Bradley is among many who can relate to the challenges Pacquiao's explosiveness and hand speed create. Although he favors Spence to win based on the advantages of youth, size and his long jab, he concedes that Spence will have to

(continued on page 32)



Welter-skelter: (L to R) Thurman, Spence, Crawford, Pacquiao and Porter, the best 147-pounders in the world.

PACQUIAO'S PEAK PERFORMANCES

HALL-OF-FAME TRAINER **FREDDIE ROACH** RECALLS HIS STAR PUPIL'S FINEST SHOWINGS SINCE THEY UNITED 20 YEARS AGO

Compiled by **Steve Kim**

LEHLO LEDWABA
JUNE 23, 2001 • TKO 6

"Ledwaba was one of the most feared fighters in the world; he was supposed to be like this unbeatable champion. People were turning him down for fights, and even Johnny Tapia was offered and said no. Ledwaba was a very, very dangerous guy and they offered Manny the fight like a month before, and we said, 'Let's go.'

"They didn't know who Manny was; the world didn't know Manny yet. He was not the superstar. Ledwaba didn't know what hit him."

JORGE JULIO
JUNE 8, 2002 • TKO 2

"It was a great night, a nice crowd with Mike Tyson facing Lennox Lewis in Memphis. Any show with Tyson on it was exciting. Something good was going to happen and we were happy to be on the undercard; it drew such a big, big crowd. Manny was simply too strong and fresh for Julio, and we got him out of there early."

MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
NOVEMBER 15, 2003 • TKO 11

"Everything went really well; we had a great training camp. Manny was definitely ready for that fight. Before the weigh-in, we were walking around and stuff, and we were at this pool table and Manny makes this incredible shot and sinks the 8-ball. I said, 'We're going to win this fight.' I mean, everything was going really well.

"We were fighting maybe pound-for-pound the number one-rated fighter in the world, and Manny went out there and just destroyed him."

JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
MAY 8, 2004 • DRAW

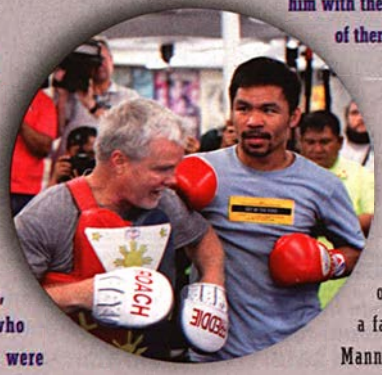
"Marquez came back very well from the three knockdowns in the first. It was a great comeback, but I felt Manny definitely won the fight with those knockdowns. I had him winning the fight by five points. Again, it was a great comeback by Marquez – but it wasn't enough."

ERIK MORALES II
JANUARY 21, 2006 • TKO 10

"A good fight – all the fights with Morales were very good, obviously. This time, Manny got to wear the gloves he wanted in the rematch; that was a big difference. Manny liked the Cleto Reyes, and he fought well in them. Manny just overwhelmed him late in the fight."

JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ II
MARCH 15, 2008 • SD 12

"Marquez really studied Manny, and people were starting to get used to Pacquiao and his speed. I mean, for a while, nobody knew who Manny was. But now people were getting to know him, and Marquez knew his style very well. He was counterpunching all night long. It was a very good, close fight."



The most famous team in boxing.

DAVID DIAZ
JUNE 28, 2008 • TKO 9

"This is the one where he started to become a complete fighter. We worked really, really hard on the right hook. He was knocking everyone out with the straight left hand. This was the first fight where he really used the right hook a lot. From the very beginning, Manny just swarmed him."

OSCAR DE LA HOYA
DECEMBER 6, 2008 • TKO 8

"I liked that fight for Manny because I had trained Oscar for the fight with [Floyd] Mayweather, and [Oscar] had some problems with the smaller, faster guys. Ivan Calderon was in the gym one day; he got in there and he gave him the most problems. I ended up saying to Oscar, 'Hey, go show this little guy that you're the real deal,' because he was getting beat up by him for a little while there. And [Calderon] had some similarities to Manny's style – but without power.

"The first combination of the fight was very reminiscent of what I had seen in Puerto Rico, and I knew we were going to win that fight."

RICKY HATTON
MAY 2, 2009 • TKO 2

"It was a great shot. He hit him on the button with that left, just laid him out on the canvas. I was a little bit worried about [Hatton] because Manny really hit him with a beautiful shot. It was probably one of his best knockouts ever."

MIGUEL COTTO
NOVEMBER 14, 2009 • TKO 12

"Cotto was landing some really good shots early; he maybe hurt Manny once or twice. Then all of a sudden, Manny starts hitting the body of Cotto. He just froze him with them and eventually he got him out of there. It was a great win."

ANTONIO MARGARITO
NOVEMBER 13, 2010 • UD 12

"I was really thinking the corner of Margarito might really do him a favor and stop the fight, because Manny was just destroying him. But they had confidence in him and let him fight on. He took a beating. But Manny also got banged up a bit too, that fight. The thing is, Manny wasn't the best defensive fighter in the world; he's the best offensive fighter.'"

TIM BRADLEY III
APRIL 9, 2016 • UD 12

"Bradley was a very competitive person. They had already had two great fights. They were action-packed, and so one more time wasn't going to hurt either one of them. Bradley could just never hurt Manny, and Manny could just walk right through him."

KEITH THURMAN
JULY 20, 2019 • SD 12

"Thurman is a very good fighter, was doing very well. He was a young guy who was coming up, a lot younger guy than Manny. Everyone thought Manny was a little washed up, maybe all done. But we had again a really good training camp, and I knew Manny was going to win that fight.

"When he knocked him down early, which I think surprised Thurman, it kind of set the pace for the fight and Manny won easily." RING

ED MULHOLLAND/MATCHROOM

make some adjustments during the fight to keep Pacquiao at a safe distance.

"I think the speed of Manny will give [Spence] some problems in the beginning of the fight," Bradley said. "Once he figures that out and starts to stop him with his jab, he'll be able to control the distance and fend him off. Spence is good at that, using the jab to keep his opponent where he wants him.

"The thing Spence has to be careful with is finishing his attack and ending up right in front of Manny. Pacquiao is a very smart fighter. He'll be waiting for that. And if it happens, he'll shoot that straight left hand at him, and that can do some damage.

"I've been hit by it. That left hand will jolt you. I think Errol Spence is a beast. I think he'll beat Pacquiao. But Manny will have a puncher's chance."

The difficulty for Pacquiao is that Spence will have a four-inch height advantage and, more importantly, a five-inch edge in reach. Combined with Spence's relentlessness when on the attack, those physical factors should give him chances to pressure the smaller man while controlling him from the outside, thus forcing Pacquiao to pay a price to get close enough to deliver the kind of punches that dominated Thurman and so many others.

That he seems unworried about these physical challenges is typical of Pacquiao. His faith in himself and his willingness to face any challenge are significant parts of his winning makeup. But there is one problem that is undeniable. As with all smaller men who move up a number of weight classes, Pacquiao's knockout power has not fully traveled with him to 147 pounds.

Pacquiao has only one knockout, a stoppage of the shopworn Matthysse, in the last 11½ years, a period that covers 16 fights. He had four straight stoppages prior to the start of that dry spell, but one (a brutal ninth-round stoppage of David Diaz) was at lightweight and one (the chilling second-round KO of Ricky Hatton) was at junior welterweight, so it seems undeniable that while his speed and explosiveness remain, his punching power has slackened.

That doesn't mean Pacquiao cannot hurt a full-blown welterweight, as Thurman learned when he found himself on his backside in the first round and rocked late in the fight as he was attempting to rally, but where once opponents didn't get up, now they do. Spence, in fact, has said he believes he is stronger than Pacquiao and will be fitter to fight than he was when he defeated Danny Garcia last December after recovering from a horrific car accident that could have taken his life but instead resulted in only minor injuries.

What is interesting about Spence's assessment is that Pacquiao feels the same way about himself, claiming, "I'm faster and stronger than him."

Pacquiao's only stoppage in the last 11 years was a seventh-round TKO of Lucas Matthysse in 2018.

Pacquiao with Manila mayor Isko Moreno Domagoso and vice mayor Honey Lacuna.

Obviously both can't be right.

How much of a challenge Pacquiao can muster at this stage is not totally clear, in that he is going from the longest layoff of his career straight into battle with one of the best pound-for-pound fighters in the world. Dangerous as that sounds, risk-taking has long been part of what drives Pacquiao, who won his first title at flyweight and has since worn championship belts in divisions ranging from 108 to 154 pounds. Along the way, he has defeated some of the best fighters of his time, including Oscar De La Hoya, Erik Morales, Marco Antonio Barrera, Juan Manuel Marquez, Miguel Cotto and Bradley, whose only two losses were to Pacquiao.

Pacquiao has said publicly he is unworried about ring rust, believing that at his age a long layoff is more important than regularly battling younger men in the ring. A measure of who he is and how he still sees himself became obvious when, not long after the fight was announced, he told a Filipino news outlet, "I didn't become a boxer to fight four-rounders or 10-rounders. I boxed to become a world champion."

Apparently he looks at his political career in the same way, adding, "Any politician dreams of being president."

While the latter may be Manny Pacquiao's new dream, his decision to challenge Errol Spence is an indication that old dreams die hard. The question now is: Does an old fighter have one dream left in him or only a sad nightmare awaiting him in Las Vegas?

Spence believes it will be the latter. He has said he will be trying for a knockout and intends to retire Pacquiao. Many a young fighter has promised much the same, only to find the task more challenging than he imagined. Certainly Spence is not the first fighter to look at Pacquiao's aging legs and squat body and think he will impose his will upon him. Doing that has proven mighty difficult because Pacquiao is a master of ring geometry, using angles and his quickness to dart in and out to deliver stinging blows and rapid-fire flurries that put opponents so far on the defensive that they are unable to answer back.

"You just can't underestimate a guy like Manny," said Nonito Donaire a few days before he himself showed that age is sometimes only a number. At 38 and seemingly on the backside of his own career, Donaire overwhelmed WBC bantamweight titleholder Nordine Oubaali to win that belt for the second time. Was that an omen of things to come?

"You never know until it's done," said Donaire, who was not quite willing to answer 'yes' to Al Michaels' iconic question. What he was willing to do, though, was to warn Errol Spence that he had best prepare himself for the sternest challenge of his career.

Pacquiao's longtime promoter, Bob Arum, no longer handles Pacquiao's career but is on record saying, "I would never count out Manny Pacquiao, but you have to make Spence a big, big favorite."

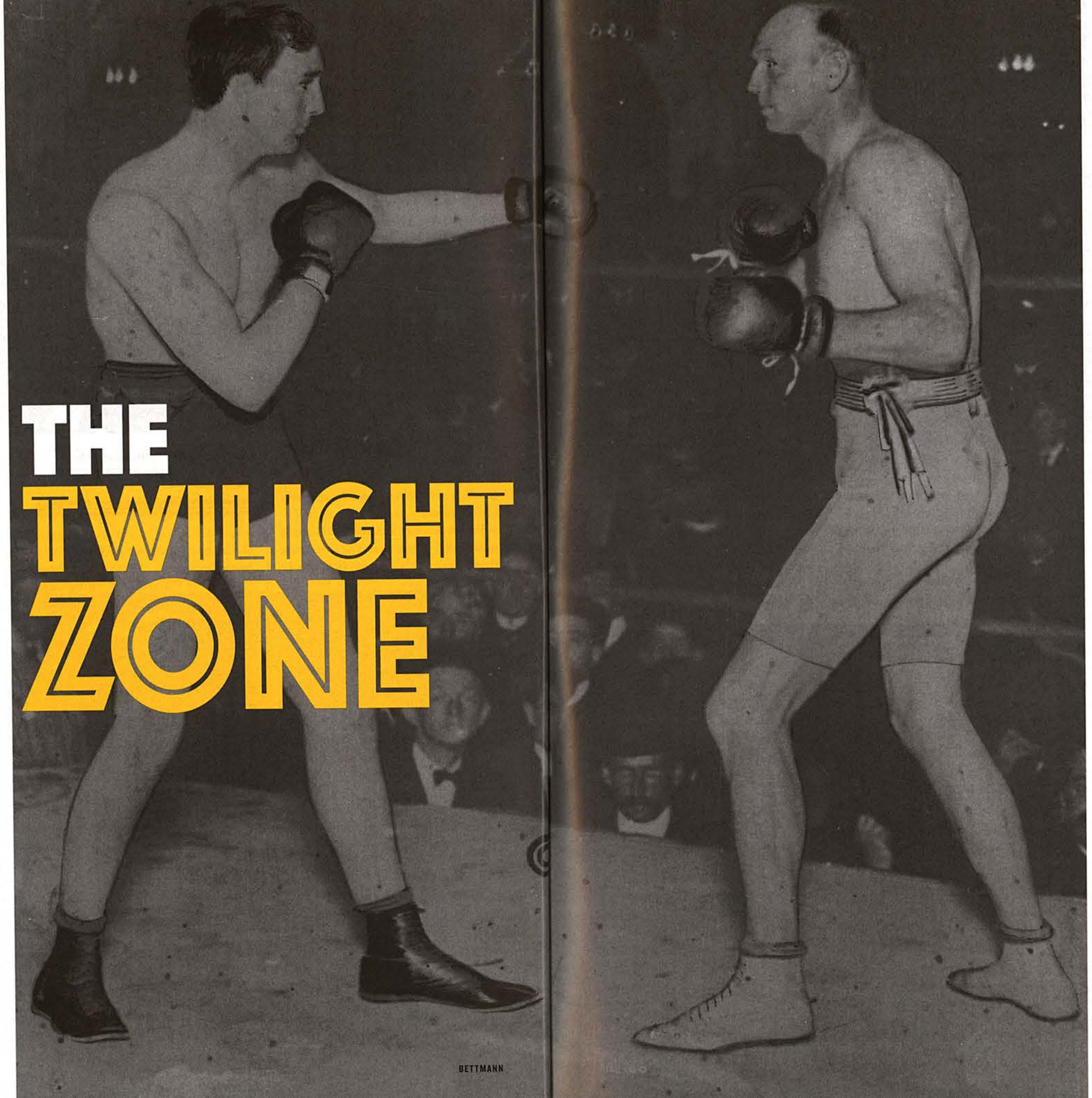
To that kind of talk, Manny Pacquiao can only do what he has done for so long. He smiles peacefully, content in his faith in himself and in his preparation at trainer Freddie Roach's Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood, saying only, "I love to challenge the top guy."

"Manny has always fought the best, and he doesn't intend to change now," Gibbons said. "He isn't fighting for money; he's fighting because that's who he is. He is still a fighter. He isn't fighting for his legacy. That is already intact. He's fighting because this is who he is."

The big question he will have to answer on August 21, then, will not be asked by Spence as much as by the calendar. Is Manny Pacquiao still who he thinks he is? If so, Errol Spence will learn, for good or ill, who he is too.

MANY BOXERS HAVE TAKEN A LONGSHOT AT GLORY IN THEIR 40S – SOME CONFIRMED THEY WERE OVER THE HILL WHILE OTHERS SHOWED THEY COULD STILL STAND ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN

By **Don Stradley**



THE TWILIGHT ZONE

BETTMANN

The deceptively ordinary-looking Bob Fitzsimmons (right) was comfortable facing George Gardner in his 40s.

In November of 1903, an audience gathered at Mechanic's Pavilion in San Francisco to witness a fight between Bob Fitzsimmons and George Gardner. At 40, Fitzsimmons was an alarmingly old relic from another era. Considering the average life expectancy in America at the time was 50 years or less, you get an idea of how antiquated Fitzsimmons must've seemed to the customers. With his scant hair and his gangly physique, he seemed even older. Yet his name still meant something – he was a former heavyweight and middleweight champion with a legendary reputation – and it was hoped that his presence could bring a bit of glamour to a fledgling weight class known as "light heavyweight," a division that had yet to be completely embraced by sportswriters or the public.

Gardner was a solid fighter with a reasonable claim to being the division's champion. It was hoped that a win over Fitzsimmons would add some luster to his name. Unfortunately for Gardner, the wily Cornishman proceeded to jab his way to a 20-round decision win and the championship. It was hardly a rousing battle – Fitzsimmons injured his hands in the bout and was content to jab and paw, causing the San Francisco Examiner to call it "one of the poorest bouts ever seen." Still, Fitzsimmons had done something rather extraordinary. He'd become the first man to win a championship in three weight classes and had helped put the new division on the map. That he achieved all of this at an advanced age made it doubly remarkable.

"I guess that I have done pretty well for an old man," Fitzsimmons said after the bout, telling the Examiner that he planned to retire and let younger fellows compete.

To Fitzsimmons, fighting beyond the age of 40 may not have seemed a big deal. After all, Jem Mace, the British bare-knuckle king who boxed exhibitions into his 70s, had once mentored him. In fact, many of the old-time boxers of the 1800s boxed at an advanced age, which may have informed Fitzsimmons' thoughts on the subject. Not surprisingly, he continued boxing for another 10 years. Results, as expected, were mixed, though his win over Gardner remained a beacon for older fighters attempting to win big fights.

Jack Johnson, Jack Britton, Willie Pep and many others boxed past the age of 40, though they didn't win titles. They were often cashing in on their names, aging athletes who had lived beyond their means and needed quick money. But being an old geezer in a ring is one thing. To compete at the highest level and succeed is quite another. In that regard, only a handful of fighters have achieved something like greatness over 40. Their names should be remembered.

Veteran Archie Moore survived four knockdowns before halting the stubborn Yvon Durelle.

THE MONGOOSE STRIKES

Archie Moore used to let his whiskers grow before a fight, allowing the gray to stand out. He'd let his belly hang over his trunks, too, all calculated to make him look old and pathetic. This would lull his opponent into a false sense of security, and then Moore could get to work using the skills he'd developed over his two decades in the ring. On December 10, 1958, when he defended his light heavyweight title in the Montreal Forum against Yvon Durelle, every ounce of his experience was called into play.

Archie's real age was a mystery. It was believed he met Durelle just a few days prior to his 42nd birthday, though some in the press felt he was much older. Archie never argued; if someone said he was 48, he'd let them think he was 48. Regardless, the veteran champion entered the ring as a 3-to-1 favorite, only to be smashed to the canvas three times before the first round was over. Durelle, a strongly built Canadian fighting in front of highly partisan fans, seemed on the verge of winning the title. "The roar of the crowd was so loud," reported the Associated Press, "it was almost impossible to hear the counts."

Almost out on his feet, Moore jabbed his way out of trouble, only to be dropped again by Durelle in the fifth. Perhaps weary of having to climb up from the canvas so many times, Moore settled down in the sixth and started to outbox his younger, stronger opponent. Durelle's inexperience showed as he started swinging wildly, hoping to catch the old champion one more time, while Moore avoided danger and countered smartly. Decades before the expression "systematic beating" was in vogue, Moore was dishing one out. Now it was Durelle on the canvas, once, twice, three times. Then came the fateful 11th round, when Moore landed a thunderous left-right combination on the challenger's jaw. Durelle fell dramatically and was counted out by referee Jack Sharkey. Later, Durelle praised Moore for his intelligence and blamed himself for the loss, saying he was simply "too eager."

For Moore, it was purportedly his 176th victory, and his 127th KO, though his exact record was as vague

The great Larry Holmes turned back the clock to outclass a much younger Ray Mercer.

An 18-year age difference didn't stop George Foreman from knocking out Michael Moorer.

as his age. All anyone could be certain of was that "The Old Mongoose" was a wizard in the ring who could still create miracle comebacks. When he learned that Durelle was in his dressing room weeping, Moore was philosophical. "I have to feel sorry for him," Moore said. "But, of course, I have to look out for myself, too."

LARRY TURNS BACK THE CLOCK

On February 7, 1992, Larry Holmes proved that savvy could overcome youth and brute strength. At 42, he handed out a veritable boxing lesson to rising young contender Ray Mercer, earning a unanimous 12-round decision by scores of 117-110, 117-111 and 115-113.

The Atlantic City Convention Center crowd jeered Holmes as he entered the ring, for he had always been an ornery, hard-to-like champion during his 1978-1985 reign, and now he seemed just another greedy old pug going for the quick cash grab. Indeed, he seemed clumsy in the first round, knocked unsteady by one of Mercer's jabs, drawing even more jeers. Yet he found his stride and started boxing, beating Mercer to the punch time and time again. The customers were cheering Holmes by the middle rounds; they knew they were seeing something unexpected, something magnificent.

Boxing history is loaded with nights where older fighters regain their youth, and this was Holmes' turn to do just that. His legs were magical, moving him around the ring with the ease of the old days, Mercer following like an obedient dog. At times, Holmes even taunted Mercer, luring him in, only to potshot him with a quick right. When he needed a breather, he'd lay on the ropes, timing Mercer with sharp counters, stinging him with combinations. By the fight's end, Mercer was bleeding from the nose, resigned to defeat.

The surprising outcome can't quite be appreciated today, but at the time, Mercer was a terror, an Olympic gold medalist coming off a stunning knockout victory over Tommy Morrison. In beating Mercer, Holmes recharged his career. He went on to some nice paydays and enjoyed more cheers than he'd heard in his prime, all unimaginable prior to the bout.

Though the fight was a non-title event, Holmes was highly emotional after the verdict. He couldn't have been happier if he'd won a title.

"I don't want you to see a 42-year-old man cry," he said at the post-fight press conference, "but when I go in my room, I'm gonna cry like hell."

REDEMPTION FOR GEORGE

If ever there was a fight for the ages and a fight for the aged, it was the night George Foreman wrested the WBA and IBF heavyweight titles from Michael Moorer. Behind on points but with the crowd of 12,000 fervently on his side, the 45-year-old Foreman shook up the boxing world in Round 10 when he landed a short, sweet right on Moorer's jaw. Moorer was suddenly on his back staring up at the arena's ceiling, watching his future floating away.

Like George Gardner many decades earlier, Moorer had been a new titleholder who had agreed to face an older fighter with a big name, hoping simply to boost his own profile. That same profile came away badly dented. He was cruising as the 10th round began and seemed on his way to a decision victory, but Foreman was patient. He knew all he needed was one good shot. He was right.

"It's like the song 'When You Wish Upon a Star,'" Foreman said. "Your dreams come true." And so it was on November 5, 1994, at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, the night Foreman became the oldest fighter to win a championship. He remains the oldest heavyweight title winner.

Foreman had started a comeback at age 38 in order to raise money for his Texas ministry. His sense of humor, along with some booming power left over from his 1970s heyday, made him a surprise marquee attraction for the early 1990s. By the time he fought Moorer, however, it seemed his return had been played out, the joke of

Old warhorse Thulani Malinga (left) put three failed title attempts behind him to beat Nigel Benn.

jolly ol' George no longer funny. Yet the atmosphere in Las Vegas seemed special that night. Foreman entered the ring in the same trunks he'd worn the night he lost to Muhammad Ali so many years earlier in Africa, as if trying to exorcise some ghosts from his past.

Ten rounds later, as Moorer was counted out, Foreman knelt in a neutral corner and offered a prayer of thanks. Mission accomplished.

LAST CHANCE FOR SUGAR BOY

When he was offered a shot at long-reigning WBC super middleweight titlist Nigel Benn, South Africa's Thulani "Sugar Boy" Malinga was 40 and considered something less than a trial horse. He had nine losses on his record and had already lost to Benn four years earlier (albeit in controversial fashion). Yet a five-fight winning streak brought him to the Telewest Arena in Newcastle, England, for what everyone knew was his last chance at a major title.

Malinga had been a bit of a star in South Africa but tended to come up short in major fights. That is, until March 2, 1996, when he scored an upset win over Benn, earning a title on his fourth try.

Malinga put on a nice display of boxing that night. The hard-punching Benn dropped him in the fifth, but Malinga resumed his smart strategy of keeping his jab in Benn's face while wheeling his way out of range. The 10,000 Newcastle fans sensed their man was fading down the stretch. He remained dangerous, for Benn was one of the era's hardest punchers, but he simply had no answers for the crafty South African. "I trained for this fight day and night," Malinga said later. "I didn't sleep."

The bout was Malinga's by split decision. The scores were lopsided – one judge scored it for Benn, 114-112, while the others saw a landslide for Malinga, 118-109 and 115-111. Putting the skewed scorecards aside, there was no doubt about the victor. All one had to do was look at Benn's puffy face after the bout.

Malinga's title win was part of a great era in South African sports. South Africa won rugby's World Cup the previous year and had recently

The legendary Bernard Hopkins also became a record-breaker when he broke Jean Pascal.

STEWART COOK

Pacquiao knew too much for Thurman, but will he teach Errol Spence a lesson on August 21?

taken Africa's most important soccer tournament, the Africa Cup of Nations, while cricket fans saw South Africa take a recent Test series win over England.

Perhaps inspired by his fellow oldster George Foreman, Malinga planned to open a church in South Africa and pastor it.

BOXING'S NEWEST GRAND OLD MAN

Bernard Hopkins gave boxing fans several great performances after age 40, including his important wins over Antonio Tarver and Kelly Pavlik, but his greatest moment may have been on May 21, 2011, in Montreal. That was the night he won the Ring and WBC light heavyweight championship at age 46 from Jean Pascal, breaking Foreman's record to become the oldest man ever to win a boxing title. "If my record goes down, you want to see it go down that way," Foreman said in his congratulations to Hopkins. "Long live the king."

Against a capable boxer 18 years his junior, and in the hometown of that fighter, Hopkins put on a show that left the 17,560 fans at the Bell Centre spellbound and probably frustrated. The final scores were 115-113, 115-114, and 116-112, all for Hopkins, no easy feat on the home turf of the now ex-champion.

Five months earlier, the two had battled to a majority draw that some felt Hopkins had won. On this night, however, there were no questions and no controversy. Hopkins simply outclassed Pascal at every turn. Hopkins not only used his left jab, but also scored with psychological jabs. At one point, while Pascal was having his glove adjusted in the seventh round, Hopkins dropped down and started doing push-ups. It was that sort of evening, one where Hopkins could seemingly do no wrong. "I didn't feel like I was 46 years old tonight," Hopkins said. "I felt more like 36."

ANOTHER FEATHER IN PAC-MAN'S CAP

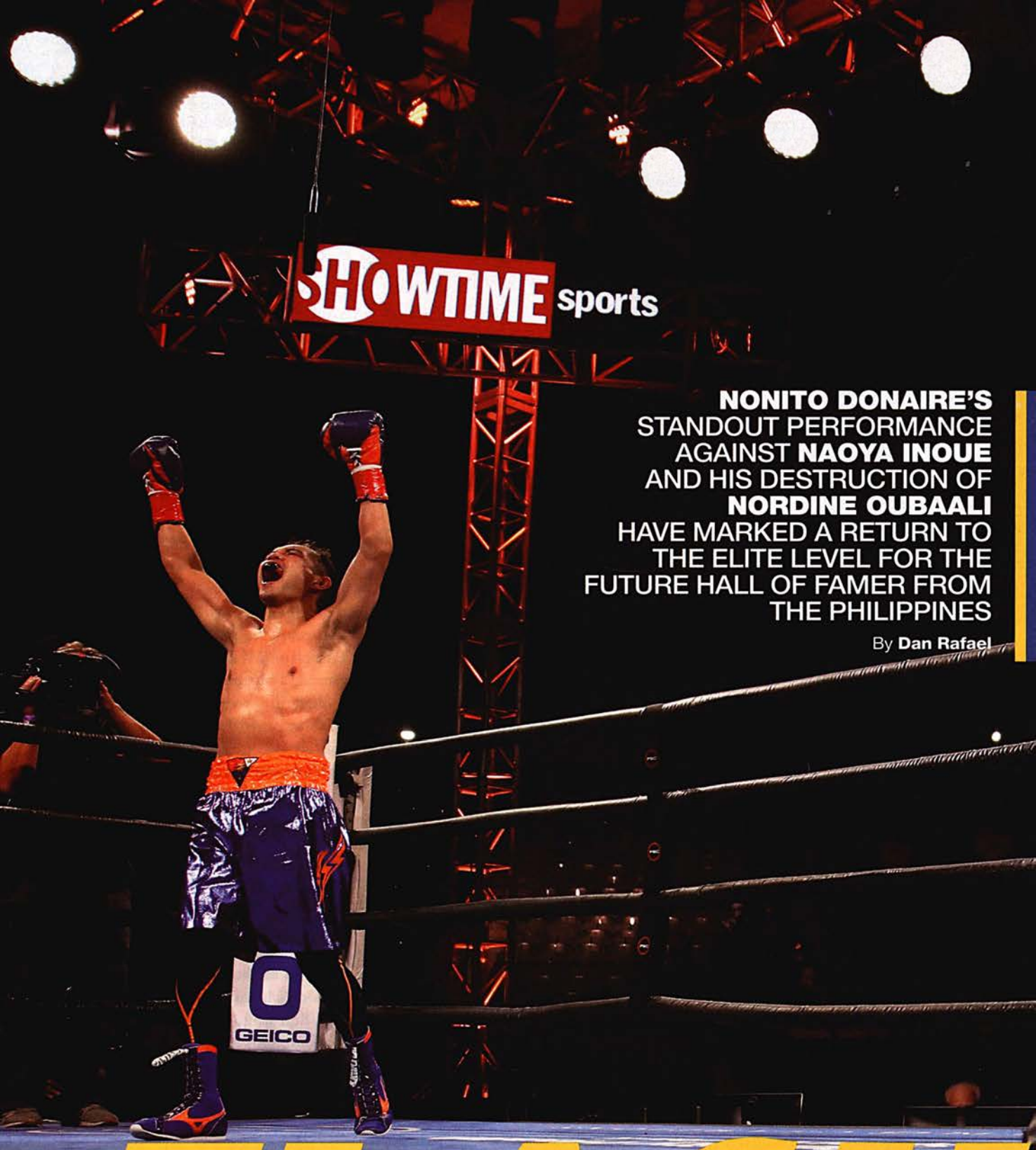
The list of 40-year-olds whipping younger opponents would have to include Manny Pacquiao's split-decision win over Keith Thurman in 2019. Pacquiao dropped the younger boxer in the first round and dominated the first half of the bout. Thurman started to even things up over the final part of the bout but was nearly broken in half by a Pacquiao body shot in the 10th. By the end, two judges scored the fight 115-112 for Pacquiao, while a third called it for Thurman, 114-113. Pacquiao, at 40, became the oldest welterweight titlist in boxing history. It was another amazing accomplishment in his fabled career.

The consistent theme in these fights is that the older fighter was a cagey operator (Fitzsimmons, Moore, Holmes, Foreman, Malinga, Hopkins, Pacquiao) while the young loser was usually a slugger, maybe a bit one-dimensional, maybe cocky, and ready to be outfoxed (Gardner, Durelle, Mercer, Moorer, Benn, Pascal, Thurman).

But one wonders if Pacquiao's next opponent, Errol Spence Jr., is the wrong kind of challenger for a fighter now 42. It was Foreman who once said a young, strong fighter was easier to handle than a young, fast fighter. Spence is jaguar-quick. Can Pacquiao deal with the speed?

Conversely, Spence will have to deal with Pacquiao's legend. Should the fight go the distance and Pacquiao is competitive, we might see a close bout go to the beloved veteran. This wouldn't be unprecedented.

When Sugar Ray Robinson was well into his 40s, he became handy at stealing close decisions, most notably against Denny Moyer in New York and later against Ralph Dupas in Miami. Both verdicts were jeered by the fans and criticized by sportswriters, but Robinson went home each time with a "W." The secret to his success on these nights was less about his ring savvy than the fact that judges are human and may well have voted for the old legend. Speed may beat experience, but there are times when a close round goes to the man with the aura.

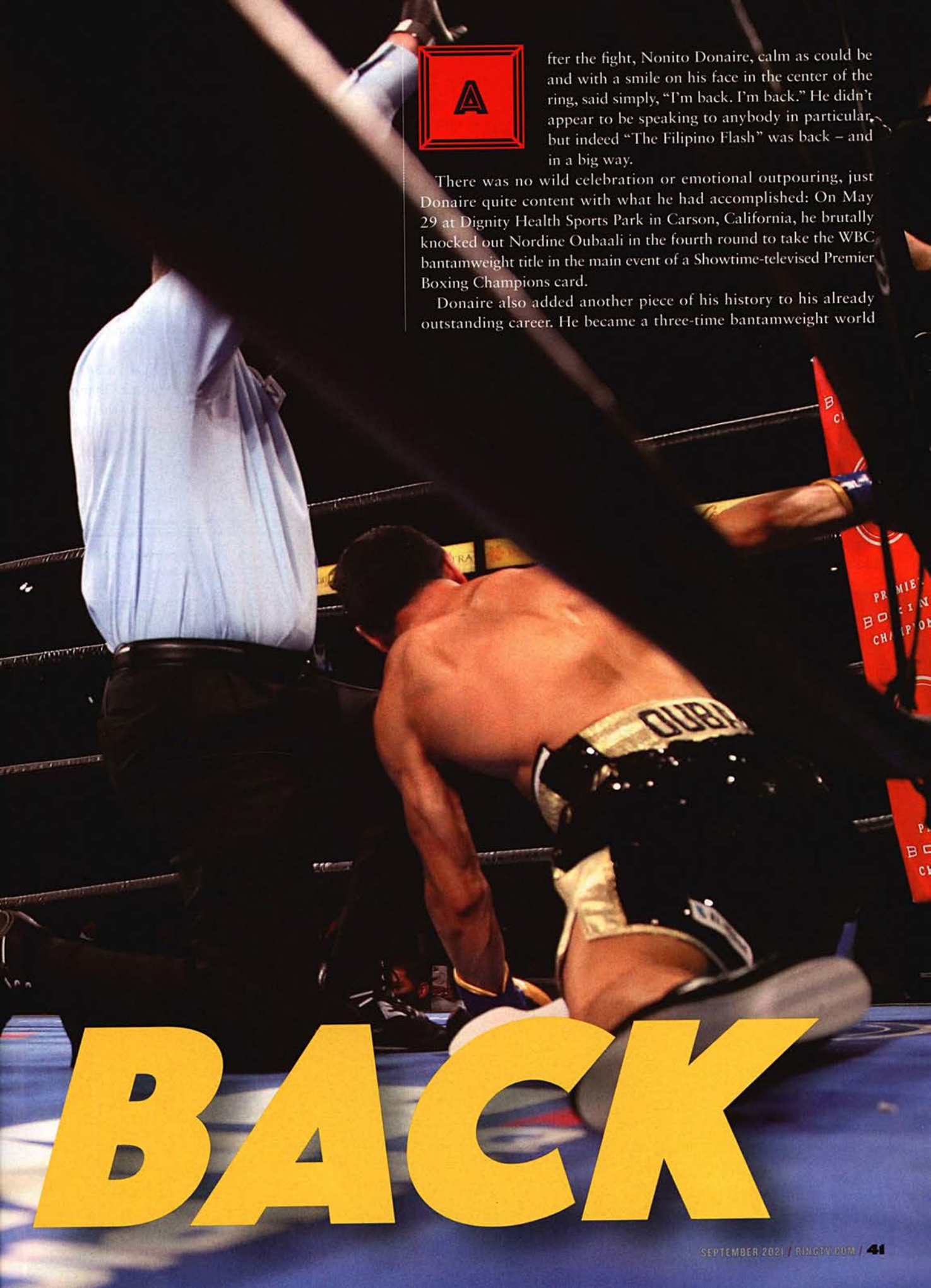


FLASH

NONITO DONAIRE'S STANDOUT PERFORMANCE AGAINST **NAOYA INOUE** AND HIS DESTRUCTION OF **NORDINE OUBAALI** HAVE MARKED A RETURN TO THE ELITE LEVEL FOR THE FUTURE HALL OF FAMER FROM THE PHILIPPINES

By **Dan Rafael**

KATELYN



BACK

After the fight, Nonito Donaire, calm as could be and with a smile on his face in the center of the ring, said simply, "I'm back. I'm back." He didn't appear to be speaking to anybody in particular, but indeed "The Filipino Flash" was back – and in a big way.

There was no wild celebration or emotional outpouring, just Donaire quite content with what he had accomplished: On May 29 at Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson, California, he brutally knocked out Nordine Oubaali in the fourth round to take the WBC bantamweight title in the main event of a Showtime-televised Premier Boxing Champions card.

Donaire also added another piece of his history to his already outstanding career. He became a three-time bantamweight world

titlist and broke his own record as the oldest fighter to win a 118-pound championship at 38 years, 204 days. Previously he had set the record in November 2018 when he was 36, stopping Ryan Burnett (who suffered a back injury while missing a punch) in the fourth round to take his WBA belt in the quarterfinals of the World Boxing Super Series.

After losing that title by decision two fights later in a Ring/WBA/IBF unification fight with Japanese pound-for-pound star Naoya Inoue in the WBSS final, Donaire was back on top after the impressive performance against Oubaali.

"The king has returned," Donaire joked. "Being at this age is not the question. It's about my performance, about my ability to grow. I believe it matters not what your age is but how you are mentally. How strong you are mentally. What I learned from the Inoue fight is that I'm back. I can still compete at this level. The whole time I was not fighting, I was learning. I'm ready for the next one."

Donaire's goal since returning to the bantamweight division for the WBSS in 2018 has been to become the undisputed champion, and he very much wants the "next one" to be a rematch with Inoue. When Inoue outpointed Donaire in November 2019 in Saitama, Japan, it was a highly competitive and action-packed battle that was picked as the Fight of the Year by The Ring and many other outlets.

Donaire figured the best way to secure a rematch would be to win another title to give Inoue a good reason to fight him again. So, Donaire talked it over with Ringstar Sports promoter Richard Schaefer, who worked behind the scenes to get him a mandatory shot against Oubaali.

The fight was delayed from December because Oubaali tested positive for COVID-19, and later Donaire did also. But when they finally met, with both coming off 17-month layoffs, Donaire (41-6, 27 KOs) did not look like he had missed a beat.

He dropped Oubaali, who was making his third title defense and had last fought on the Inoue-Donaire undercard, for the first time in his career with a calling-card left hook near the end of Round 3, the Frenchman putting both of his gloves on the canvas after absorbing the hard shot.

Oubaali (17-1, 12 KOs), a 34-year-old southpaw and two-time Olympian, did not seem badly hurt by the punch, but then Donaire flattened him face-first with another left hook as the bell ended the round. Oubaali beat referee Jack Reiss' count and tried to collect

The great Donaire proved to be levels above Oubaali.

himself during the rest period, but Donaire was all over him in the fourth round. Eventually, Donaire landed a huge left hook, a right hand and a left uppercut that dropped Oubaali hard, prompting Reiss to wave off the fight at 1 minute, 52 seconds.

"This is one of the best fighters of our generation. In addition to being technically smart in the ring, he can punch as well. That's an amazing combination," Schaefer said. "He did exactly what he said. I asked him in the locker room, 'What are you going to do?' He said, 'I'm going to be patient; he's going to make a mistake and I'm going to knock him out.' Pretty simple. That's what legends do. That's what fighters of that level do, and so this was more than just a win. It was a statement for the division. He's putting the division on notice."

Having scored a significant win in crowd-pleasing style, Donaire believes he's earned a rematch with Inoue.

"This is why I wanted to win this fight. Unification is my next goal," said Donaire, who beat Oubaali despite injuring his left ankle in the first round and his left hand in the third round. "The only thing I haven't accomplished in boxing is becoming undisputed. That is my goal. The next phase is the rematch.

Donaire may have a second belt to protect if he meets Inoue again.

"Inoue said whoever wins this fight (Oubaali-Donaire), he wants to fight, so I think it's on his radar, and because I've been calling him out as well. That's pretty much where I'm standing – getting that fight and going for it. Richard is going to make it happen because I told him to make it happen, and Richard should be commended for making fights that I want. That's something that we want and something that can happen, and I'm looking forward to it. My mind is set on Inoue. I will add to my arsenal and it will be very different than the last fight."

While Donaire wanted Inoue next, a couple of weeks after the win over Oubaali, Donaire got the unexpected opportunity to meet WBO counterpart and fellow Filipino John Riel Casimero (30-4, 21 KOs), 32, in a unification bout on August 14, also in a Showtime main event at Dignity Health Sports Park. Donaire could not resist the opportunity to claim another title, but Inoue remains his longer-range target.

Inoue (21-0, 18 KOs), 28, retained his Ring and WBA/IBF titles by third-round knockout of massive underdog Michael Dasmarinas on June 19 in Las Vegas, and Donaire was ringside. A few days earlier, Donaire and "The Monster" joked with each other and posed for photos together, each expressing the desire to face each other again.

"My motivation is to unify all four titles, so you've got Casimero and we have Donaire, and that's who I want to fight and that's my motivation for now," Inoue said through an interpreter.

Carl Moretti, the vice president of Top Rank, Inoue's co-promoter, said he thought a rematch with Donaire, a former longtime Top Rank fighter, was possible.

"Based on the first fight, you're talking about another classic," said Moretti, noting that the prospect of the rematch has come up in conversations with Inoue's team, but it had not been decided whether he would remain at bantamweight or make a move up to junior featherweight.

If Donaire is unable to land a rematch with Inoue, he has another idea on how he can go about making more history. He would like to face the winner of the forthcoming rubber match between unified junior bantamweight champion Juan Francisco Estrada and former titlist and four-division champion Roman "Chocolatito" Gonzalez, who are expected to meet again later in the year.

And Donaire is not talking about inviting the winner up to

bantamweight to challenge him for his title. He wants to go down to the 115-pound division and challenge the winner. Donaire won an interim belt at junior bantamweight in 2009 and defended it once, but he moved up to 118 before he could fight for a major belt in the division.

"If I don't get the fight with Inoue soon, I'd go back to 115 and get the title in a fifth weight class and then go back up and try to get that fight with Inoue again," Donaire said.

He insisted he would not have an issue making weight. On the day of the weigh-in for the fight with Oubaali, Donaire said, "I weighed 116 and I drank a little bit of water and I was 117½ [for the weigh-in]. I can still make 115 pounds. I want to fight the winner of [Estrada-Gonzalez]. I want to fight anyone with a title, really. I just want to get that title in a fifth division and I'm good. Whoever wins, whoever has the title. If the Inoue fight doesn't come to fruition, we can make that happen, and then I would go and relinquish it at 115 and go back to my belt at 118."

Historian Cliff Rold, a writer for BoxingScene.com who has a particular expertise in smaller-weight fighters, loves the idea of Donaire facing the Estrada-Gonzalez III winner.

"Estrada is taller, younger and rangier, so he might be the tougher match. Gonzalez would have to fight a perfect fight and avoid the hook, but that's an issue for anyone who comes at Donaire," Rold said. "All three belong in the Hall of Fame one day, so if we end up with old man Hall of Fame clashes that still matter, sign me up."

Donaire's latest world title conquest came a remarkable 14 years after he turned out the lights on Vic Darchinyan with a left hook to win the IBF flyweight belt, the first of the nine major sanctioning body titles he has won in a 20-year career.

Since the win over Darchinyan that put Donaire on the map, he has beaten numerous quality foes such as Oubaali, Burnett, Moruti Mthalane, Hernan "Tyson" Marquez, Vladimir Sidorenko, Fernando Montiel, Omar Narvaez, Jeffrey Mathebula, Toshiaki Nishioka, Jorge Arce, Simpiwe Vetyeka, Cesar Juarez and Darchinyan in a rematch.

Donaire was also voted 2012 Fighter of the Year by the Boxing Writers Association of America and has twice been widely cited as having authored the knockout of the year: for the big blow against Darchinyan in 2007 and for his second-round destruction of Montiel on a left hook – what else? – that netted him a unified bantamweight title in 2011.

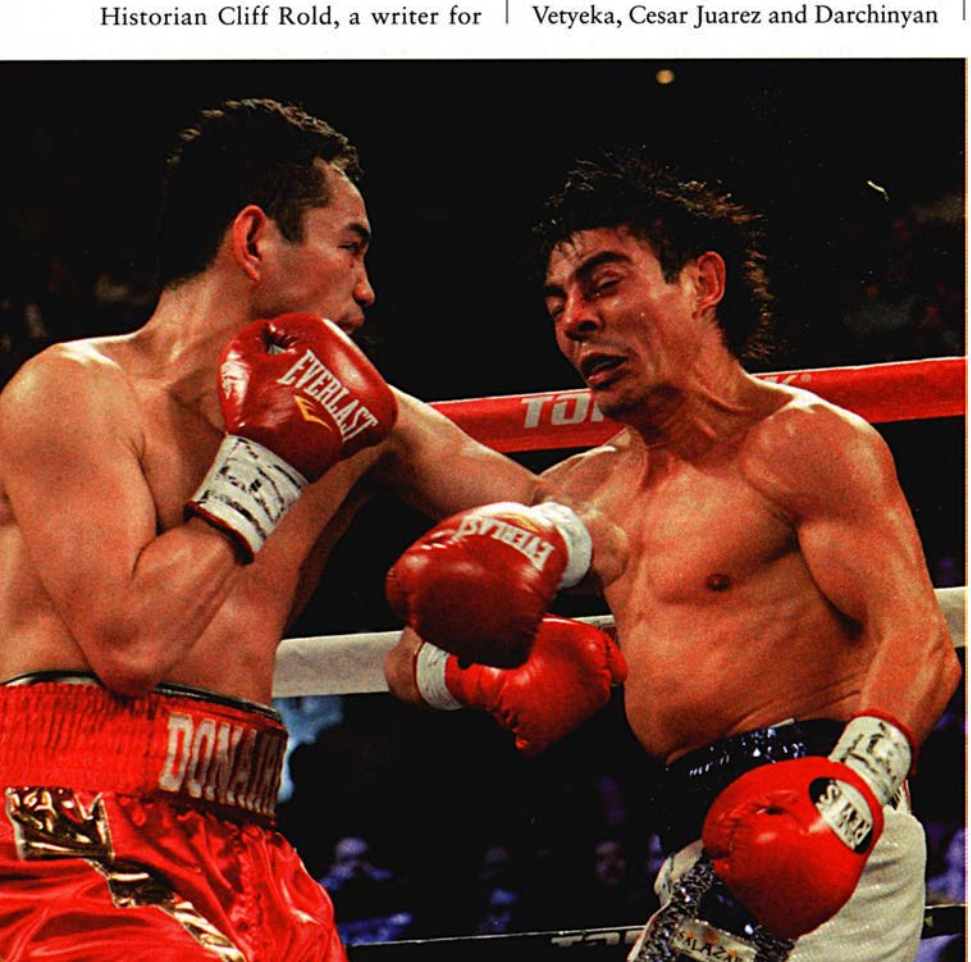
"I think it's one of the best left hooks out there, and I'm proud to say that," Donaire said. "With the right distance, the right timing, it takes everybody out because I put a lot of velocity in there, a lot of my weight into it. A lot of people don't know how to do that. I'm a little guy, but I've had two knockouts of the year awards, so that should say something about my power."

With a prolific body of work, ample accomplishments and longevity rarely seen in smaller-weight fighters, Donaire is a surefire International Boxing Hall of Famer.

He said he hasn't given that much thought, though. "I don't really think about it. You know me. I am the kind of guy who goes step by step, fight by fight," said Donaire, who did mention he was proud to have held world titles in three decades: the 2000s, '10s and now '20s. "If I ever do [get inducted], that's when I'll celebrate. For now, I'm just going into my mind to think about the next phase, the next training camp, going into the next fight. I don't look at what I don't have yet."

Schaefer has been especially impressed by Donaire's longevity.

"Look at some of his fights from 10 years ago and then look at [the Oubaali fight] and you won't see much of a difference," Schaefer said. "It's the same Nonito Donaire. It's absolutely amazing after all these years he is still able to deliver at that level. It's the professionalism, his team, his preparation, his mental readiness. It's



Donaire nails fellow multi-weight titleholder Jorge Arce in their 2012 showdown.

beautiful to watch."

Rold views Donaire as an all-time great.

"From flyweight to bantamweight, and assuming Donaire could have at least fought at bantamweight with same-day weigh-ins, he's a serious match for most of the best at 118 in history," Rold said. "I think what's worth considering is what might have been. Donaire is the rare fighter to come back down the scale to be a force late in life after a lengthy time away. Think what a disaster that was for so many guys. Sugar Ray Leonard couldn't do it with Terry Norris. Emile Griffith couldn't do it with Jose Napoles. The list goes on. What if he never leaves bantamweight or comes back sooner?

"Great bantamweights have often had to move up in weight for more money, but they had more opportunity to build a body of work before doing so. The pressure to jump around winning belts can kneecap chances to leave a lasting historical mark in single divisions. Donaire has a unique opportunity if he could get, and win, a rematch with Inoue and even Guillermo Rigondeaux, to go backwards and do it now."

While Donaire's place in boxing history is secure, so too is his position as perhaps the greatest fighter from the Philippines not named Manny Pacquiao.

"After Manny Pacquiao, Donaire is right there in the debate for No. 2 among his countrymen [of] all time, with Pancho Villa and Flash Elorde," Rold said.

Even the great Pacquiao has been impressed by what Donaire has accomplished.

"Nonito's success as a fighter is made up of equal parts of hard work, courage, athletic talent, and intelligence," Pacquiao said in a prepared statement. "Since his knockout victory of Vic Darchinyan to win his first world title, he has produced a career in boxing worthy of being a first-ballot Hall of Famer. Nonito is amazing. Nonito fought brilliantly [against Oubaali]. He was so well-prepared. No one could beat him on that night.

"Nonito is an inspiration. He exemplifies the heart and soul of the Filipino, always rising to the occasion with valor and dignity when challenged. Every Filipino boxer should learn from his example and respect it."

As for Donaire's place in Filipino boxing history, Pacquiao wouldn't put a number on it but agreed with Rold that he is one of the all-time best.

"I leave those questions to the fans and the media who ultimately decide them, but I will say this: Nonito is incomparable," Pacquiao said. "What he has accomplished is historic and I am very proud of the way he has represented the Philippines and Filipinos around the world."

Donaire, humble as ever, said he appreciates the outpouring from fans and media touting his greatness following his big win over Oubaali. Where he ranks in boxing history or among Filipino fighters is up to others to determine, he said.

"I just represent myself as best as I can," Donaire said. "It's never a race for me or a popularity contest. It's more of a blessing if people do think of me that way. I'm very grateful. I don't really think about it much, just more of trying to set an example. Manny was a good example for me. I want to inspire other fighters. That's pretty much my train of thought: How am I inspiring people?"

Becoming the undisputed bantamweight champion in the twilight of his career would surely inspire many. Schaefer said he will do what he can to secure those fights for Donaire.

"Go look at the rankings and see who the other champions are, and that's who Nonito wants to go after, one after the other," Schaefer said. "Oubaali, check mark. Next one, check mark. Next one, check mark, and then undisputed. That's what we're going to do. We're going to work on that. I mean who wouldn't want to fight one of the most legendary fighters in Nonito Donaire?"

ETHAN MILLER

Fernando Montiel fell victim to the 2011 KO of the Year in a 118-pound title clash.

PINOY POWER

NONITO DONAIRE AND **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** ARE SET TO MEET IN AN ALL-FILIPINO BANTAMWEIGHT UNIFICATION BATTLE ON AUGUST 14, WITH THE WINNER TARGETING RING CHAMP **NAOYA INOUE**

By **Michael Montero**

This style confrontation should produce a spectacular fight.

When Showtime Boxing announced its summer schedule in April, it featured an interesting bantamweight matchup between Guillermo Rigondeaux and WBO titleholder John Riel Casimero. The Cuban veteran and the power-punching Filipino were set to fight on August 14 at a venue to be determined. I spoke with both men and wrote a 2,000-word preview on the bout, then sent it in just days before the editorial deadline for our September issue.

Then the fight was scrapped, but for good reason.

On June 19, Premier Boxing Champions announced that they were switching things up. Rigondeaux was out and newly minted WBC titleholder Nonito Donaire was in, setting up an all-Filipino showdown between him and Casimero. The breaking news sent boxing fans into a frenzy (and this writer to his laptop to edit his original story). In terms of fighter styles, Donaire and Casimero are virtually guaranteed to produce fireworks in the ring. Better yet, this fight will unify world titles. And in terms of venue, PBC chose the perfect location.

Donaire and Casimero will square off at the Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson, California, just south of Los Angeles. The 8,000-seat outdoor arena, formerly known as the StubHub Center and the Home Depot Center before that, has hosted numerous Ring Magazine Fight-of-

the-Year winners. Who could forget the wars between Francisco Vargas and Orlando Salido, Lucas Matthysse and John Molina Jr., Timothy Bradley and Ruslan Provodnikov, or the third bout between Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez? Ask anyone who's attended a fight card there, and they'll tell you there's something special about that place. Fans rarely leave "The War Grounds" unsatisfied.

Will Casimero and Donaire carry on that tradition? Everyone is eager to find out.

In an age where unification bouts are rare and often difficult to put together, Donaire (41-6, 27 knockouts) claims this one was a cinch.

"It was really just a matter of talking with my team," he told The Ring. "I spoke with my promoter, Richard Schaefer, and voiced my desire to unify all of the bantamweight titles. I definitely want a rematch with Naoya Inoue, but in the meantime, we don't want to wait around. I want to collect another belt. So Richard went to Al Haymon and PBC, and they made it happen."

Sean Gibbons, president of MP Promotions, echoed those sentiments from the Casimero side. "When the opportunity to fight Donaire presented itself, it was a no-brainer," he said. "Casimero fears no man; he's fought in 10 different countries. The goal is simple: He wants to be the first Filipino fighter to completely unify a division."

Donaire has the same goal. "At this moment in time, all I'm focused on is getting all the belts," he said. "That's the only thing I haven't yet accomplished in boxing."

When it comes to professional boxing, Donaire has accomplished a lot. A four-division titleholder, "The Filipino Flash" will undoubtedly be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, three years after he hangs up his gloves. His pro career has now spanned two decades, during which he's fought as a flyweight all the way up to featherweight. In 2018, he joined season two of the World Boxing Super Series, signing on for their bantamweight tournament. Donaire had spent the previous seven years fighting between 122 and 126 pounds. The move down in weight served him well; he looked like a rejuvenated fighter.

"Bantamweight is the best weight for me," he said. "I have to cut a little bit, but I'm very comfortable. This weight keeps me focused. When I fought at 122 and 126, I didn't really have to focus on my weight as much, so I could get lazy between fights. But when I joined the tournament, I knew the phone could ring at any moment for the next fight, so I had to stay ready. I had to stay on weight.

"Also, I feel that the guys at bantamweight are a lot lighter with their punches. It's different taking punches from featherweights [than it is from] bantamweights."

Donaire made it to the WBSS bantamweight tournament finale, where he faced Inoue in Japan. Many predicted that he was going to get pummeled by his much younger opponent. After all, "The Monster" had won his previous eight fights by often-brutal stoppages. But Donaire gave Inoue all he could handle in a distance bout that earned The Ring's 2019 Fight-of-the-Year honors. Both men took tremendous punishment; Inoue suffered orbital bone fractures and Donaire was dropped hard in the 11th round from a liver shot. The Japanese star won by unanimous decision.

Donaire bounced back from the Inoue loss with an explosive fourth-round stoppage of previously unbeaten Nordine Oubaali in May. They were originally set to fight in late 2020, but both men would ultimately test positive for the COVID-19 virus, delaying the bout. As happy as Donaire was with the Oubaali win, he couldn't stop thinking about getting another crack at Inoue.

"When I fought Inoue, I was fighting smart in the early rounds," he said, "but then I got into a brawl. I would be a very different person going into a rematch. My conditioning and foot placement will be much better. I'll be more disciplined with my head movement. He'll be

Casimero's victory over Duke Micah was his sixth straight knockout win.

Donaire, at 38, has lost none of his drive or ambition in the sport.

fighting a different guy. I know I can beat him.

"But my focus is on John Riel Casimero first. When I get the job done with him, the next step is a rematch with Inoue."

Casimero (30-4, 21 KOs), who has also held titles at 108 pounds and 112 pounds, is The Ring's No. 2-rated bantamweight, just behind Donaire. Nicknamed "Quadro Alas," Tagalog for "Four Aces," the brash fighter who sports dyed blond hair and bout-changing power with both hands is beaming with confidence. Casimero is riding a six-fight win streak, including an upset third-round stoppage of Zolani Tete in 2019. Tete was the No. 1-rated bantamweight at the time. "He was the most difficult opponent I've faced," Casimero told The Ring. "He was tall and awkward and long. He gave me great experience that I can use in this upcoming fight."

The win over Tete put Casimero in very rare company, joining Manny Pacquiao, Donnie Nietes and Donaire as the only Filipino fighters to win titles in three or more weight classes. His most notable work has been in fights outside of the Philippines, giving him the reputation of a road warrior among fight fans.

Casimero was 100 percent dialed in on Rigondeaux, promising to "retire him" and "send him back to Cuba." His goal was to defeat the Cuban, then face Donaire.

"That way I can retire a second guy who will be in the Hall of Fame," Casimero told The Ring before the fight with Rigondeaux was canceled. "[Donaire's] power and the experience are still there, but the skills and movement have eroded. I want his WBC title."

Casimero asked, and the Boxing Gods answered.

"I've never been a fan of Donaire and his attitude," he said. "Now I'm going to give him an attitude adjustment. Sure, I give him credit for the win, but Oubaali was perfect for his style. I mean Oubaali is a good boxer, but he's also very small. And he fought the wrong fight against Donaire. I walk around at 147 pounds; I have to work hard to get down to bantamweight."

Although he's not looking past August 14, Casimero is eager to get in the ring with Inoue as well. "After Donaire, I want Inoue," he said. "That's the biggest fight for me. He calls himself 'The Monster,' but I feel he's more like a turtle because he's scared of me and he hides in his shell. I'm the real monster. I plan to smash The Japanese Turtle. And by that time, it will be for all the belts."

As for Donaire, he'll be turning 39 later this year but says he's got several years of fight left in him.

"I feel really good," he said. "Experience is one key factor, but most importantly I'm healthy and I'm focused. I'm doing what I need to do in terms of strategy. Sometimes I get into brawls and lose focus."

Getting lured into brawls has been a habit for Donaire, and it has cost him dearly in several fights. But there was none of that against Oubaali, and Donaire credits a recent change in his corner for his performance.

Rachel Donaire, Nonito's wife, fought at a high level as a taekwondo amateur. After serving as his co-manager along with Cameron Dunkin for several years, she eventually became the sole manager. Following the Inoue fight, she took over as head trainer. The move raised some eyebrows, but the doubters were quickly silenced. With his wife in his corner against Oubaali, Nonito became the oldest fighter to win a bantamweight title. At the same time, Rachel became the first female head trainer of a male boxer in a successful title fight.

Rachel's primary mission has been to get her husband to focus on defense. "She doesn't want me getting hit," he told The Ring. "We have conversations every day about strategy. She has experience in taekwondo, so she has a different perspective than boxers. She watched a bunch of tape on Oubaali and we developed a strategy for that fight, and that's exactly what we'll do for Casimero.

"Things are different now because I have a clear goal. In the past, I was just kind of floating around. Now I wake up in the morning and I'm excited to go run. I can't wait to go to the gym."

August 14 can't get here soon enough.

Michael Montero can be found on social media via @MonteroOnBoxing. His podcast "The Neutral Corner" can be seen every Monday on TheRingDigital YouTube channel, and heard on audio podcast platforms around the world.

World
International
Boxing Federation

GREATEST HITS:
SUGAR SHANE MOSLEY

ALREADY A LEGEND IN THE GYMS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, SHANE MOSLEY DAZZLED THE WORLD WITH ONE BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE AFTER ANOTHER

By **Tom Gray**

Mosley and his father, Jack, worked tirelessly to turn Shane into a world-class fighting machine.

He was a brilliant welterweight and a solid junior middleweight, but if you were lucky enough to see Sugar Shane Mosley as a lightweight, you will never forget that irresistible blend of speed, power and skill.

Mosley was an outstanding amateur who collected a hoard of national titles. Eventually campaigning at 139 pounds, the Pomona, California-based amateur standout was beaten to a place on the 1992 U.S. Olympic team when he dropped a decision to future professional rival Vernon Forrest. With an eye-popping 250-16 record in the unpaid ranks, a 21-year-old Mosley turned pro in February 1993.

Super-talented and freakishly fast, Mosley also carried dynamite in both fists. With this state-of-the-art firepower at his disposal, he wreaked havoc on the 135-pound division, but success did not come without a price.

"I went through hell [to make weight] and had to train hard all the time," Mosley recalled in an interview with The Ring. "But I was working with two great world champions: (WBO junior welterweight titleholder) Zack Padilla and (two-time junior lightweight titleholder) Genaro Hernandez. I had great sparring and had almost no choice but to be really, really good. Those were great guys

Mosley and wife Trista Pisani at a Super Bowl party in Miami.

to work with, and I loved the gym because it was always competitive.

"That part of California has a large Hispanic community, so coming up I fought Rafael Ruelas (in an amateur bout), sparred Gabriel (Ruelas), Hector Lopez, Pepe Reilly. Oscar De La Hoya was coming up. (Julio Cesar) Chavez Sr., Paul Gonzalez, who was an Olympic gold medalist. And I worked with Azumah Nelson. I had a great amateur career, but I also had a lot of great professionals around me. All these guys had a strong work ethic, so I had it really good. That made me better than the average person."

Following 23 straight wins, 22 by knockout, Mosley outpointed Phillip Holiday to claim the IBF lightweight title in August 1997. He made eight successful defenses, all by knockout, and his performance level was dazzling. At the time, Stevie Johnston and Orzubek Nazarov were rival titleholders, but despite the gutsy Californian being more than willing to unify, those matchups would never take place.

"I'd beat Stevie Johnston as an amateur," said Mosley. "He was a great fighter and probably one of the toughest guys I had to fight. I wouldn't say he was the hardest hitter, but he was the toughest fighter I ever came across in the amateur ranks. He was really good.

"With Nazarov, I just never got the chance. I don't know what would have happened with that. I think I was a stronger and bigger lightweight than a lot of these guys."

Mosley's arduous battle with the scales is evidenced by the fact that he skipped junior welterweight altogether. He moved directly to 147 pounds and would even accept challenges at 154. Multiple championships came at both weights, and he bolstered his resume with triumphs over De La Hoya (twice), Fernando Vargas (twice), Luis Collazo, Ricardo Mayorga and Antonio Margarito. Losses to Forrest (twice), Winky Wright (twice), Miguel Cotto, Manny Pacquiao, Floyd Mayweather and Canelo Alvarez did nothing to diminish the modern-day Sugar Man's Hall of Fame credentials.

"It was a great feeling [to be inducted], because I worked so hard and trained so hard," said Mosley, who was a first-ballot selection for the Class of 2020. "I fought for the fans, and I wanted to be one of the greats. Being inducted into the Hall of Fame verifies my greatness and proves that I became the fighter that I wanted to be."

The affable three-weight world champion and former pound-for-pound No. 1 now looks back on six of his career-defining moments.

PHILLIP HOLIDAY

August 2, 1997, Mohegan Sun, Uncasville, Connecticut • Title: IBF lightweight

"Phillip Holiday was a very hard worker, strong, but before we got in the ring, he was 10 pounds heavier than me. That was my fault, because I'd taken too much creatine and couldn't hold anything down. I think that's the reason I didn't get a chance to stop him. I wasn't as strong as I would normally be, and I was like, 'Shit, I'm probably not going to knock him out.' But I knew I was going to win. I knew he was very tough, and I had to be ready to fight the whole 12 rounds. He was the type of fighter who would throw a lot of punches, so I had to give him some movement and use my boxing skills a little more. I put some power on the shots, but it was more boxing skills that night and he didn't know what to do with me. I had done a lot of sparring with Padilla, who threw lots of punches too, and he was even stronger, being a 140-pounder."

RESULT: MOSLEY UD 12

DEMETRIO CEBALLOS

February 6, 1998, Mohegan Sun, Uncasville, Connecticut • Title: IBF lightweight

"A lot of people were saying Ceballos was gonna beat me and take my title. I had fought a guy right before this, Manuel Gomez, and knocked him out in the 11th round. Ceballos had stopped him earlier (six rounds), but Gomez had plenty of time to train for me and less time to train for Ceballos. They figured that Ceballos could walk me down, just like he had Gomez, but it doesn't work like that. I had the mentality where I was working in the gym with world champions every day and they were coming after me and I was going after them. Ceballos wasn't even a champion; I was the champion, so he's not on the same level. He tried as hard as he could to beat me and carry out his game plan, but I knew for a fact that there was no way he could beat me. He took a lot of punishment because he tried to walk through all my punches, believing that he was bigger than me. His corner convinced him that he was a bigger fighter, but I ended my amateur career at 139, so I was a big 135-pounder then. Ceballos and his corner believed they were bigger than me and that was totally not the case."

RESULT: MOSLEY TKO 8

WILFREDO RIVERA

September 25, 1999, Pechanga Resort & Casino, Temecula, California • Welterweight non-title bout

"That was a hard fight, especially with me going straight from 135 to '47 and him coming back down from 154. It was very strenuous because he was a very good fighter; this wasn't a nobody. I give him a lot of credit. He was strong, a great fighter, and while he didn't win a world title, he fought everybody there was to fight. He was in there with (Fernando) Vargas, Oscar (De La Hoya), Pernell Whitaker (twice) – top fighters – and he gave all of them a run for their money. Actually, I don't know how well he did against Vargas (Rivera scored a knockdown and was stopped in six), but he boxed well against Pernell and Oscar. I took that fight because it was important to let the world know that I'm looking to fight Oscar De La Hoya for the welterweight title. I'm not looking to play around and get a world title shot. I wanted to get right into it."

RESULT: MOSLEY KO 10

OSCAR DE LA HOYA 1

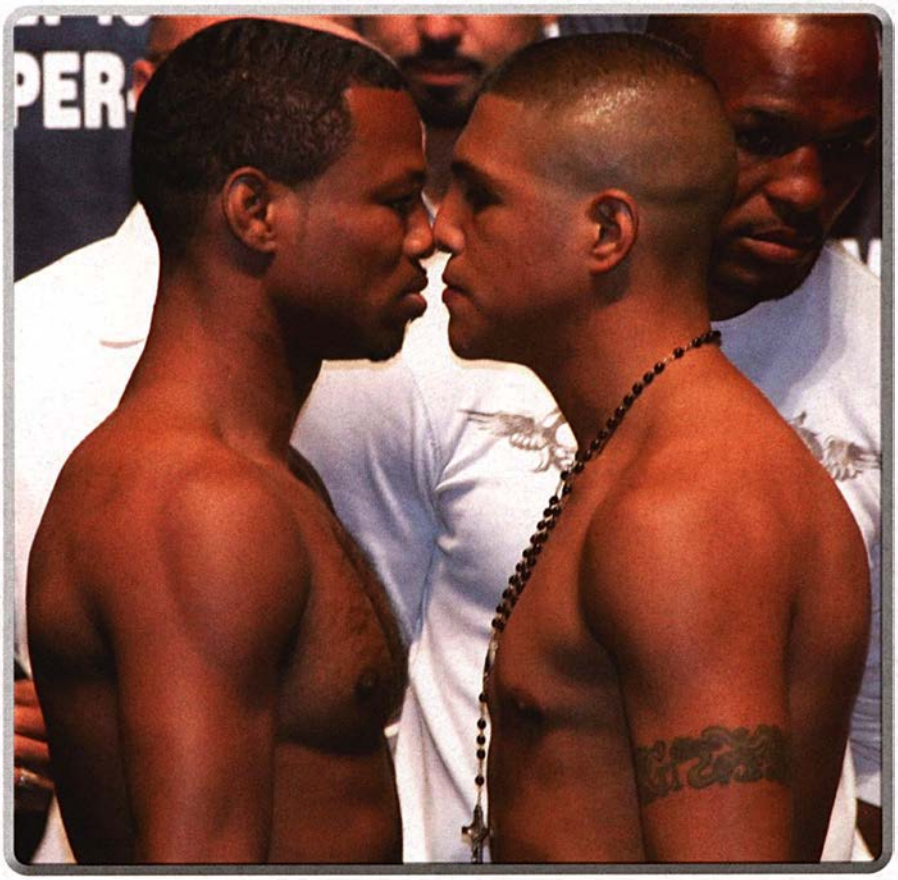
June 17, 2000, Staples Center, Los Angeles • Title: WBC welterweight

"Everyone in California knew that we were the two top guys, and they wanted to see us fight. It was just the world didn't know how good a fighter I was. They knew I was a great fighter, but they didn't know how good I was after moving from lightweight to welter. But if you look back, Oscar was fighting at 132 in the Olympics and I was 139. I was actually a bigger fighter. I'm just happy that he gave me the opportunity to showcase my skills and we made a great fight that night. We opened up the Staples Center; it was a beautiful night, everybody was there, and we both fought our hearts out. We both started off at a very high tempo, but I was able to keep up that tempo all the way through the fight and he started to slow down. Oscar's footwork began to slow down and I got even faster, so there was a clear difference. That was the fight that was going to put me on top, and I had to let it all hang out."

RESULT: MOSLEY SD 12

FERNANDO VARGAS 1

February 25, 2006, Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino, Las Vegas • Junior middleweight non-title bout



"He was strong, naturally big and came to the ring at about 174. I was only 154 when I came to the ring, but I was very strong, too, and I had good punching power. But the main thing was my speed, and I caught him with a punch that made his eye blow up big. Vargas did a good job that night, but I was just a little bit too fast for him. After I hurt him, he couldn't really recover, so I thought the stoppage was justified. In the rematch, I caught him with a sweeping left hook (Mosley won a direct rematch in six rounds)."

RESULT: MOSLEY TKO 10

ANTONIO MARGARITO

January 24, 2009, Staples Center, Los Angeles • Title: WBA welterweight

"It was a very satisfying win, because in 2009 I was the older fighter. I wasn't necessarily a gatekeeper, but a lot of people felt that I was way past my prime. The problem was that Margarito is a Mexican fighter with a Mexican style and I'm from California. That's my style of fighting, too. A lot of people didn't see the little inside body shots he'd do or [shots] over the top. I'm like, 'You know what, you're not going to beat me with this style! I can do this in my sleep!' I've been sparring with Hispanics, Latinos, Mexicans my entire life. I'm pretty much a Mexican fighter – a Black Mexican, basically. Margarito didn't really land a punch on me – a couple here and there. I don't care if he had loaded gloves or not; he wasn't winning that night."

RESULT: MOSLEY TKO 9

Tom Gray is Managing Editor for The Ring Magazine. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

VARGAS: CRAIG DURLING; MARGARITO: DONALD MIRALLE

SEPTEMBER

THE TITLE UNIFICATION CLASH BETWEEN **STEPHEN FULTON** AND **BRANDON FIGUEROA** HIGHLIGHTS SHOWTIME'S INVESTMENT IN THE LOADED 122-POUND DIVISION »

By **Steve Kim**

STEVEN RYAN

SHOWDOWN

JOHN MCCOY/GETTY IMAGES

To say that Showtime is committed to the junior featherweight division is an understatement. The premium cable network that presented the unforgettable 122-pound trilogy between Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez, which produced The Ring's 2007 and 2008 Fights of the Year, kicked off its renewed interest in the division with Angelo Leo vs. Stephen Fulton in January.

Fulton outpointed Leo in the matchup of undefeated standouts, winning the WBO title and climbing to the No. 3 spot in The Ring's rankings in the process. In the co-featured bout of this Showtime Championship Boxing card, Ra'eese Aleem stopped Vic Pasillas in another matchup of unbeaten up-and-comers, joining Fulton and Leo in The Ring's rankings.

Showtime has kept a spotlight on the junior featherweights by broadcasting the comeback of former unified beltholder Danny Roman, who has positioned himself for another title shot with an impressive 10-round decision over the tough Ricardo Espinoza Franco in May. The network is also following the comeback of Leo, who scored a hard-fought majority decision over once-beaten Aaron Alameda in June.

At press time, the rumor was that Roman would take on Aleem on the undercard of the best 122-pound matchup that Showtime has made so far: the September 11 showdown between Fulton (19-0, 8 KOs) and Brandon Figueroa.

Figueroa (22-0-1, 17 KOs), a 24-year-old volume puncher from Weslaco, Texas, proved his mettle by lifting the WBC title from previously unbeaten Luis Nery on May 15 in front of a small but enthusiastic crowd at the Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson, California, on May 15. The Ring's No. 4-rated contender wore down Nery over seven fast-paced rounds.

While Nery (31-1, 24 KOs) came into the bout as the betting favorite, he was overwhelmed by the constant pressure of the hard-charging Figueroa, whose persistence bent the will of the highly touted Mexican. A well-placed body shot sent Nery to the floor, writhing in pain, where he was counted out by referee Thomas Taylor at 2:18 of the round.

At the time of the stoppage, one judge (Lou Moret) inexplicably had Nery up by the tally of 59-55, another (Zachary Young) had Figueroa on top by the score of 58-56, while the third (Edward Hernandez) had the contest deadlocked at 57-57.

"The plan was to break him," explained Figueroa. "My corner told me to pressure him and that he wouldn't last. That's exactly what happened. I knew he was getting tired; he was trying to box me. I saw him breathing heavy. My team just said it was time to go get him."

Figueroa is a no-frills type of fighter. He's not elegant or stylish. He simply relies on a great volume of punches to erode his opponent's will. And while he can box from both stances, Terence Crawford he's not. For him, switch-hitting isn't so much about any strategic deception but finding easier pathways for the multitude of swarming shots he launches from various angles. It's a ring mentality that is very reliant on being well-conditioned, and unlike his older brother, Omar, a former lightweight titleholder, he has an abundance of discipline that can support such a style.

Now Figueroa is headed for a title unification tilt on September 11.

"We've been waiting for this fight against Fulton and it's finally going to happen," said Figueroa. "I knew I had to get through Luis Nery first. Everything has its time. I envisioned that I was going to beat Nery, and now I see myself beating Fulton. I know he's coming with everything he's got and that we're going to give the fans a hell of a show."

Fulton had a ringside seat at "the War Grounds" and got a close look at who he'd face in the fall. And while he respects Figueroa's grit and toughness, he isn't impressed by the Texan's overall talent.

"I think the performance leading up to the stoppage was a bit sloppy and all over the place," Fulton told Ring Magazine. "I feel like he'll get exposed each time, more and more. Skill-wise, he's one of those fighters where you know he's coming to fight; you know he's coming forward."

It's clear that the sharpshooting Philadelphian believes he can exploit Figueroa's defensive deficiencies.

"For sure, but who's to say he won't be working on other things to tighten

Nery (right) had a good start, but he was stopped by the bigger, stronger Figueroa.

TIME sports

Fulton was largely dominant in his January 2020 points triumph over Arnold Khegai.

his skillset leading up to our fight? So things will be different, I'm guessing," Fulton surmised. "If not, I'll just take it straight to him, but I'm always down to make adjustments."

One clear advantage that Figueroa has is his size; at 5-foot-8 he has a couple of inches on Fulton.

"It doesn't frighten me," said the confident "Cool Boy." "I'm a big guy, I may not be as tall as him but he doesn't use his height or his reach advantage. He just comes in and fights Mexican-style."

Figueroa does indeed have that hell-bent-for-leather mindset where he doesn't hesitate to take one to give a few, which is what happened early on versus Nery.

But Fulton should not be mistaken as just being a well-schooled boxer. He proved against Leo that he is more than willing and able to mix it up in-close versus a physical grinder. In many ways, he beat Leo at his own game as he stood his ground and chopped up the defending beltholder with sharp, precise punches on the inside. This fight was originally slated for 2020 but was postponed when Fulton tested positive for COVID-19 just days before the bout.

Currently, Murodjon Akhmadaliev, the unified IBF/WBA titleholder, is The Ring's No. 1-rated junior featherweight, followed by Roman.

But the cocksure Fulton believes that he already sits atop the division.

"I'm fighting all these undefeated guys. I'm the one calling everybody out," Fulton said while stating his case for being the premier 122-pounder on the planet. "I'm the target of this division right now. When you see a guy who's defeated eight undefeated fighters, working on his ninth [on] September 11, it's like everyone else in the weight class is like, 'I can beat him.' I got the target on my back because everyone wants to beat the fighters that've beaten all the undefeated fighters.

"Not only that, I'm a world champion about to become unified. Look at my career. Everything I said I was going to be doing, I'm doing. I'm soon to be the first undisputed at this weight class. So I say I'm the one with the target on his back. Everyone may see the little flaws that I may have, but they don't understand the type of intelligent fighter I am. I'll make the adjustments, work on different things each fight leading up to the fight. I feel like I'm the best in the division."

Stephen Fulton had defeated seven unbeaten opponents before challenging then-undefeated Angelo Leo for the WBO title.

But to be fair, it is Akhmadaliev that is the consensus choice (despite just nine bouts on his ledger). Should Fulton defeat Figueroa, fans will beat the drums for a showdown with 'MJ.'"

Fulton says he won't let network politics or promotional rivalries get in the way of his mission to be undisputed. "It could be made. Don't be surprised if it is made," he said with a chuckle that suggests he knows something the rest of us don't. "For sure, I want that fight."

But first he must face Figueroa and handle his business, which is something he does on a daily basis outside the ring. Despite being just 26, Fulton is an entrepreneur who opened up his own eatery, CBS Crabs, last summer, and before that CBS Auto, a car inspection service.

"I don't want to just rely on boxing," explained Fulton, who credits his trainer, Wahid Rahim, for steering him in this direction. He says that he has seen other boxers from his city fall by the wayside when they couldn't bring in income from boxing. The last thing he wants to be is the next hard-luck story. "They really didn't know anything but boxing," he said.

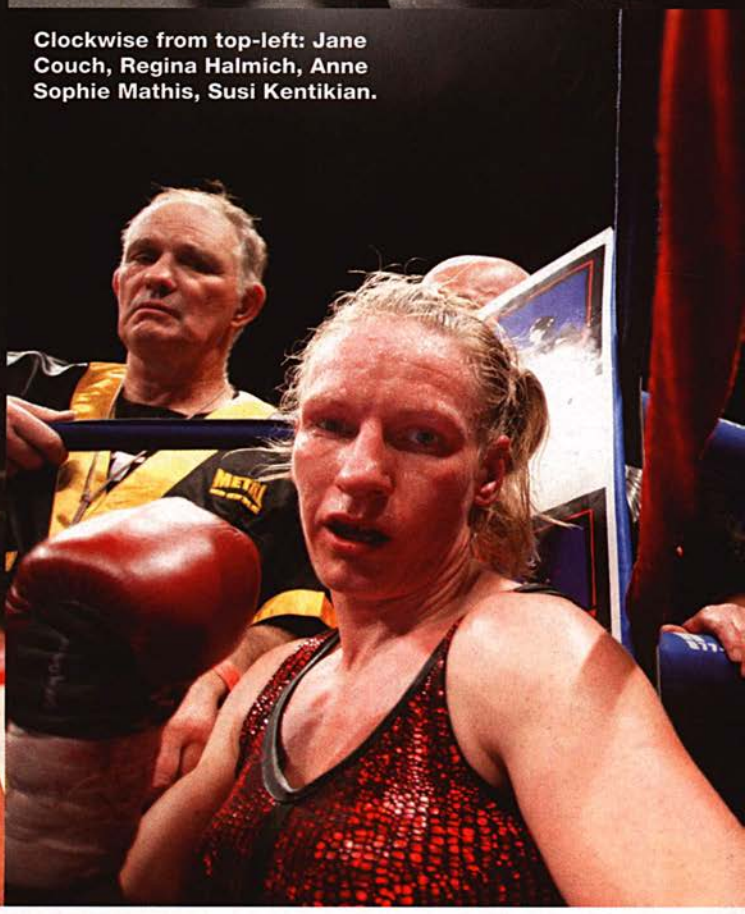
Fulton is as well-rounded a person as he is a prizefighter. As good as he is at boxing, the sport is what he does – not necessarily all he is.

"You don't have to go back to school to keep up your intelligence; you can read to keep that up to par, to be in the loop and talk fluently in interviews with reporters, or in business meetings," said Fulton, who graduated from University City High School in 2012. "A lot of guys fall off, and I've watched them, because they didn't want to know anything but boxing and to fight. Around those times when these guys were losing and had nothing else to do, I was still working, cleaning toilets and cleaning up homes, and things like that. I always wanted to make money. I didn't want just boxing to be it for me."

Fulton has a clear vision for his life, but for now, he's got plans for his boxing career, which is long from over.

"I want to be undisputed at the weight class which I started in," he stated. "Then I'd like to move up and try to work my goal [of unifying] up there.

EDWARD DILLEY/GETTY IMAGES



Clockwise from top-left: Jane Couch, Regina Halmich, Anne Sophie Mathis, Susi Kentikian.

THE GREAT EIGHT

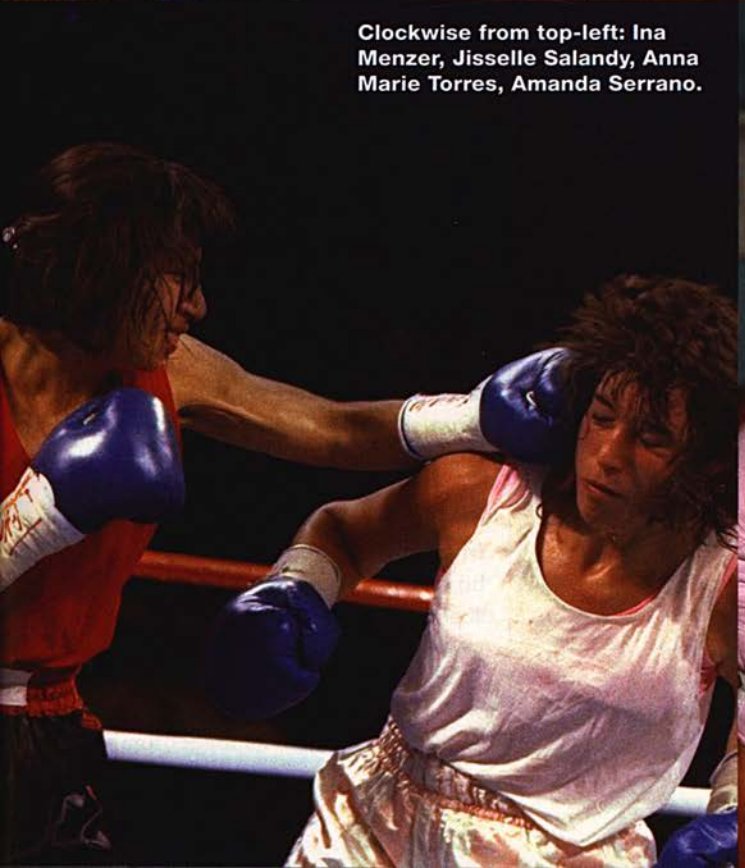
COUCH: MICHAEL STEPHENS; HALMICH: PICTURE ALLIANCE; MATHIS: STEVE SNOWDEN; KENTIKIAN: SIMON HOFMANN; MENZER: KLAR/ULLSTEIN BILD; SERRANO: AL BELLO; TORRES: DANIEL CARDENAS/JAM MEDIA/LATINCONTENT

THEY MAY NOT BE WELL-KNOWN OUTSIDE OF THEIR HOME COUNTRIES, BUT THESE FEMALE STANDOUTS ARE WORTHY OF INDUCTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL BOXING HALL OF FAME

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

It happens every year. The ballot for the International Boxing Hall of Fame arrives and the debates begin – not about who should get in for a particular year, but who has consistently been left out of a trip to

Clockwise from top-left: Ina Menzer, Jisselle Salandy, Anna Marie Torres, Amanda Serrano.



Canastota, New York, to receive a plaque enshrining them with the greats of the sport.

In 2020, it was one of the easiest years to select an induction class to the hall, with Floyd Mayweather Jr., Wladimir Klitschko and Andre Ward all getting the call to represent the Class of 2021. But then the outrage. What about Dariusz Michalczewski? Orzubek Nazarov? Sung-Kil Moon? And on and on and on.

When it comes to the ladies, whose first IBHOF class was in 2020 with Christy Martin and Lucia Rijker earning their modern era spot, there was just as much banter among the hardcore followers of the sport, with those voices getting even louder when Laila Ali and Ann Wolfe were chosen as the modern era Class of 2021.

So what is the common denominator across the board? Basically, it comes down to the modern era voting base (which largely consists of full members of the Boxing Writers Association of America) being very United States-centric, and also being well-versed only in foreign fighters that have received exposure in the States, such as Ukraine's Klitschkos or the Netherlands' Rijker. Add in younger members of the voting base, whose frame of reference only goes back as far as their interest in the sport goes, and there are a host of fighters who don't get a fair shake when ballots are mailed out.

Of course, this is a generalization, as there are voters like Lee Groves and Cliff Rold, who not only cover the sport as completely as they possibly can but also educate their fellow scribes on eligible fighters on each year's ballot. But for the most part, the most popular fighter may win out over the more deserving fighter.

On the ladies' side of the ballot, with two spots open each year, it's hard to argue with the four inductees thus far. For the Class of 2022, though, it's important that this process doesn't become a popularity contest, as there is a whole world out there beyond the United States, especially with little exposure for the sport in the U.S. to begin with until recent years. Here are eight names (in alphabetical order) to keep an eye on:

Jane Couch alongside former heavyweight champion Vitali Klitschko.

JANE COUCH

As part of the committee that helped determine which ladies earned a place on the ballot, I've been involved in some friendly skirmishes with my colleagues (no blood was spilled) as we whittled the ballot down to a manageable number. One fighter who we've battled over is Jane Couch. Now, England's "Fleetwood Assassin" didn't have the long championship reign that some of her peers did, and she did lose the biggest fights she had against the likes of Rijker, Sumaya Anani, Holly Holm and Anne Sophie Mathis, but she did defeat Leah Mellinger and Marischa Sjauw, and more importantly, she was the first woman licensed to box in the U.K. in 1998, paving the way for current British stars like Chantelle Cameron, Savannah Marshall, Terri Harper and Natasha Jonas. That means something.

REGINA HALMICH

The no-brainer of no-brainers, Germany's Regina Halmich deserved to be in the International Boxing Hall of Fame yesterday, with only Lucia Rijker having a case for beating her there. Owner of a 54-1-1 pro record during a career that ran from 1994 to 2007, Halmich won championships at 108, 112 and 115 pounds, going a remarkable 44-1-1 in world title fights. Add in that the divisions she fought in were the most talent-rich in the sport at the time and that she paved the way for women's boxing in Europe, where she was a legit star, and this all-time great NEEDS to head up the Class of 2022.

SUSI KENTIKIAN

A flyweight champion for five years the first time around and three years in the closing chapter of her career, Armenian-born Susi Kentikian joined Regina Halmich and Ina Menzer as the holy trinity of women's boxing in Germany, with the 5-foot-1 powerhouse playing a huge role in making her sport mainstream there. With 17 knockouts among her 36 pro wins, Kentikian only lost twice in her career, in close 2012 bouts against

Melissa McMorrow and Carina Moreno, and she avenged the loss to Moreno less than a year later to go along with victories against Elena Reid, Mary Ortega and Naoko Fujioka.

ANNE SOPHIE MATHIS

Facing Marischa Sjauw in her second pro fight showed just how fearless Anne Sophie Mathis was, and while she lost that one, the French standout won 26 of her next 30 bouts, earning world titles and a well-deserved reputation as one of the biggest punchers in women's boxing history. That power was on display in her biggest win in 2011 as she traveled to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to knock out hometown favorite Holly Holm. Mathis also deserved to get a KO victory over Christina Hammer in 2014, only to have a controversial no-contest verdict rendered. Victories over Myriam Lamare, Jane Couch, Belinda Laracuente and Cindy Serrano only bolster her legacy.

INA MENZER

Born in Kazakhstan, Ina Menzer made her name in Germany from 2004 to 2013, ruling the featherweight division for nearly five years, going 16-1 in title fights during that stretch, as she beat a steady stream of legit challengers like Ramona Kuehne, Sandy Tsagouris, Laura Serrano and Yazmin Rivas. After losing her 126-pound belts to Jeannine Garside in 2010, Menzer ran off four wins before closing out her career in 2013 by decisioning unbeaten Goda Dailydaite to win the featherweight crown one last time.

JISSELLE SALANDY

The most tragic story in women's boxing history may very well belong to Trinidad and Tobago's Jisselle Salandy, who was killed in an automobile accident in 2009 at the age of 21. Before her untimely passing, Salandy was 16-0 with six knockouts and the holder of several 154-pound title belts. Remarkably, she made her pro debut at the age of 13 and had a regional title by 14, and it was only upward and onward from there. Salandy's potential seemed limitless before tragedy struck, leaving an endless series of What Ifs.

LAURA SERRANO

One of the hotbeds of women's boxing is Mexico, and Laura Serrano was an early pioneer of the sport in the fighting-rich nation, even if she was prevented from competing there for most of her career due to a 1947 ordinance keeping women from boxing events. Undeterred, Serrano fought anyone and everyone in the United States, and her 17-5-3 record reads like a Who's Who of the sport, from Christy Martin and Layla McCarter to Alicia Ashley and Chevelle Hallback and everyone in between. Want to talk about strength of schedule? In women's boxing, Laura Serrano invented the term.

Anne Sophie Mathis poses with Sue TL Fox of WomenBoxing.com.

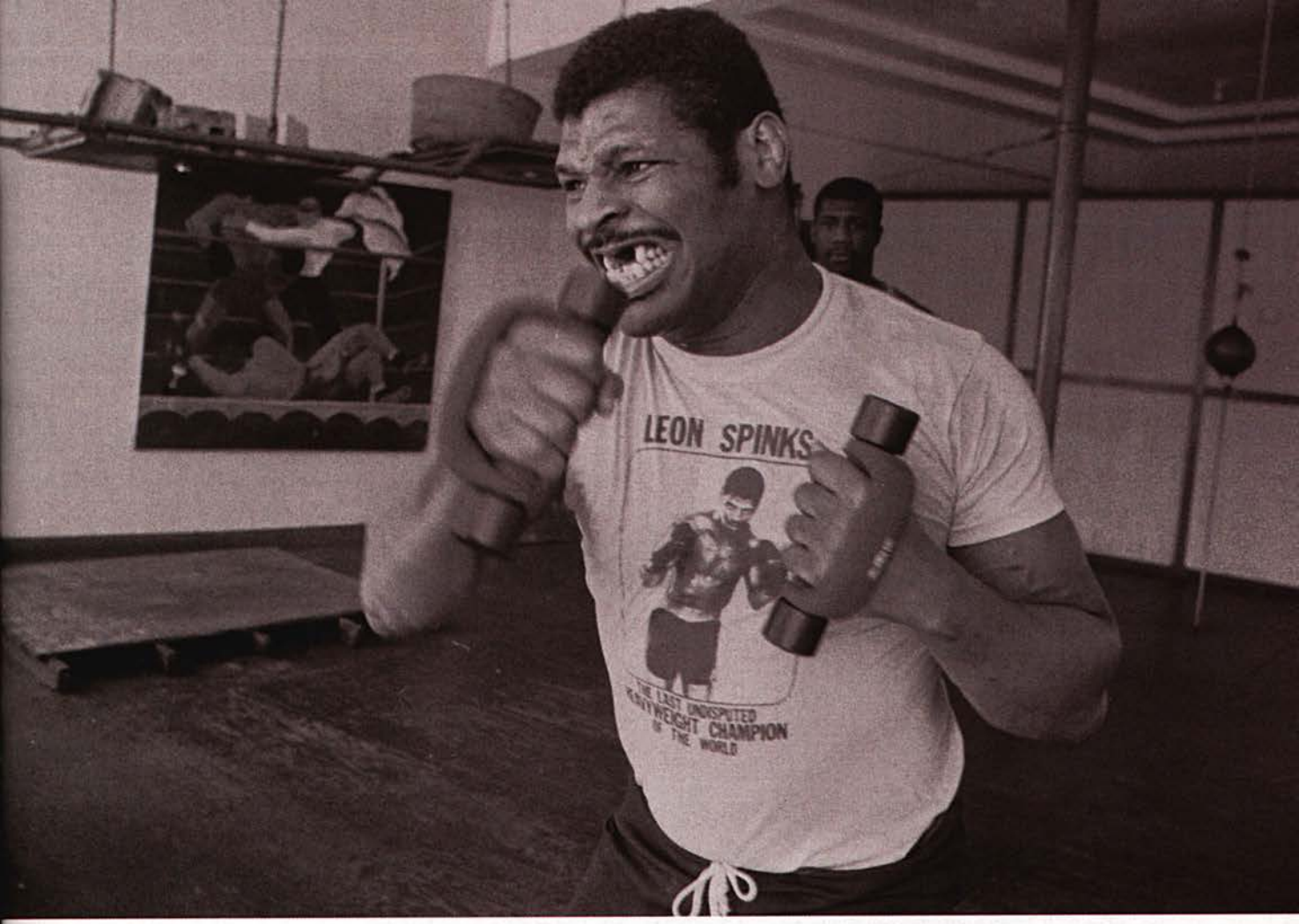
ANA MARIA TORRES

Ana Maria Torres learned her craft under the tutelage of Jose Morales, father of Erik, so you know she could fight. And as a two-time junior bantamweight titleholder, she had plenty of opportunities to test herself against the best in the game. More often than not, the Mexican battler passed those tests, with her 28-3-3 record including victories over Mariana Juarez, Jackie Nava, Ava Knight and Alesia Graf. She also ended her career with a 15-bout unbeaten streak (13-0-2) before leaving on top in 2012 as the WBC 115-pound champ.

(Low) life

A MEMOIR OF JAZZ, FIGHT-FIXING, AND THE MOB

Charles Farrell



TIM CHAPMAN

LEON'S LAMENT

AN EXCERPT FROM A NEW COLLECTION OF STRAIGHT-TALKING TALES FROM THE SEEDY SIDE OF BOXING

By **Charles Farrell**

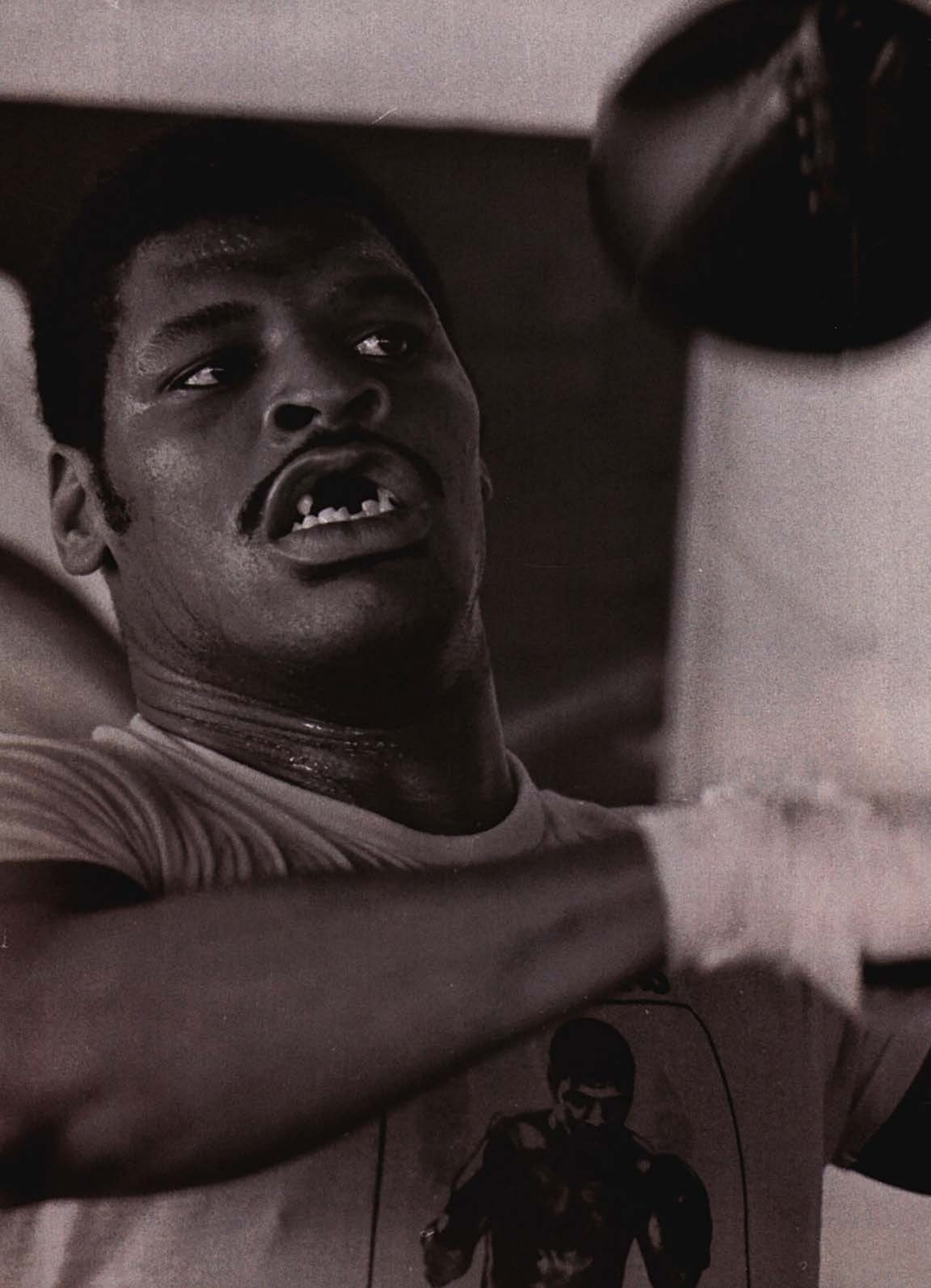
Leon Spinks (above) was a star after his surprise victory over Muhammad Ali, but the glory days as champion would be brief.

I love Leon Spinks. He was a loyal man of great dignity and integrity, one who spent his professional life being misrepresented and misunderstood, the butt of too many stupid and obvious jokes. Sonny Liston's tombstone reads "A Man." That's perfect. Leon Spinks' tombstone could read the same.

I took over managing Leon not because I wanted to, but because he had done me a favor and gotten beaten up for his trouble. So, I owed him. I once got him badly hurt due to my own poor judgment, and that's an existential error – and maybe a karmic one – that stays with me today.

I was worried enough about his health after his fight with John Carlo to only be willing to put him into fixed fights. There was no longer any business reason to put him in ones that he would win – he had no career left – so I arranged two that he would have lost. For reasons best left unsaid, those fights never happened. But taking a dive was something Leon Spinks would never have dreamed of doing on his own. He would have taken the beatings instead.

Boxing fans are often quick to come to conclusions about what's morally right and what's morally wrong regarding the sport. I guess I'm not smart enough to be able to do that; to me, there are gray areas. So, although I wound up not doing right by Leon Spinks, I tried to. I wanted to put him into a position where no one would hit him with a legitimate punch ever again.



I wrote *(Low)life: A Memoir of Jazz, Fight-Fixing, and The Mob* because Hamilcar Publications asked and paid me to. Writing a memoir is an inherently vain and unnecessary thing to do. There was no public clamor for Charles Farrell to tell his life story.

So why read it?

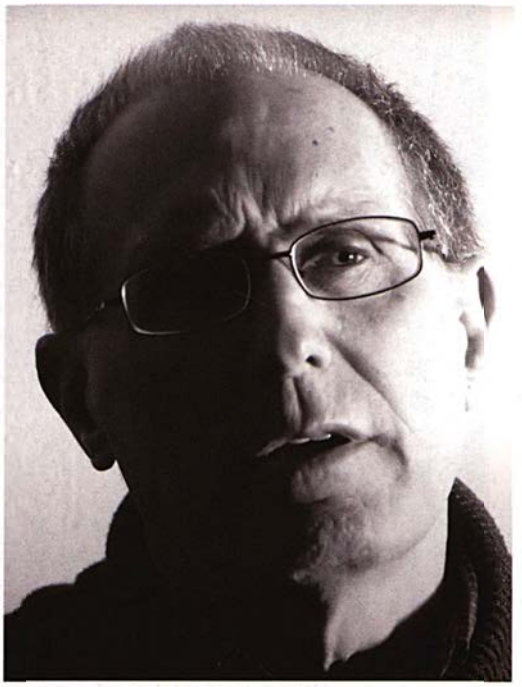
There are a few reasons, and maybe one or two of them will work for you. It's the most insider boxing book ever written. There's no heroic and noble bullshit and none of the tawdry masculine melodrama that gets mistaken for boxing literature. Everything in the book really happened, although not everything that happened is in the book. You might resent me for having written it, but at least, for once, someone is telling you the truth about boxing. None of this is to suggest that I don't have the greatest respect and admiration for the boxers themselves. As a group, they're the most gifted, empathetic, courageous and even-tempered people I've known.

And if you listen to Sonny Rollins or Ornette Coleman or want to know what it's like to have a hit put out on you by the Mob or meditate or have some curiosity about animal rights or veganism – the book might resonate with you.

Nothing about the promotion was normal, starting with the promoters themselves. The company sponsoring the fight was called either Panic Promotions or Madness Connection, depending on whether you were looking at the contract or the fight posters, and was run by a couple of DC drug dealers who used the event as a fundraiser for the coke and crack mayoral candidate of choice, Marion Barry.

I had convinced Marc Machain to come in from Rutland, Vermont, to lose to Leon. The Rutland Bull wasn't eager to take the loss, but he was a friend and a stand-up guy, and he was going to be allowed to have a give and take fight with Leon until a "rib injury" would force his corner to stop the fight over his protests. It wouldn't be exactly the KO I would have most wanted, but it would be an entertaining fight that would get people talking. There'd be no slipup.

And then Machain's CT scan came back bad. The DC Commission wouldn't clear him to fight. With almost no advance time, I had to get creative. I enlisted the help of John Carlo, Fernely Feliz's trainer and a real-life tough guy, who looked more like a fighter than most fighters. Although he'd never had a pro fight, John agreed to fight Leon. I had to find a way to somehow get him past the Commission by falsifying his record and providing a fake doctor's report, and then finessing him through the various local sports radio, TV show, and newspaper reporters who would have semi-insider questions.



Author Charles Farrell

The fake medical records were easy: (Vinnie) Vecchione had someone at a doctor's office in Boston who'd supply them. We'd done this together before. Compiling a plausible boxing record for John Carlo took a little more doing, but I knew which heavyweights were routine losers to the up-and-coming prospects in unregulated states – places where results weren't always sent to record-compiling agencies. I was able to come up with the names of real fighters as John Carlo's victims – the "fights" taking place in Montana, Idaho, and North Dakota.

I generously gave John a 13-2-1 record with nine KOs. Boxing insiders might wonder why they'd never heard of a white heavyweight who was 13-2-1, but no commissioner was going to be sharp enough to pick it up.

As long as John didn't do anything too questionable during the prefight interviews, we'd be OK. He nailed them, saying exactly what he was supposed to say in a tone that mixed humility with determination; he was honored to fight a great former champion, he didn't come to DC to lose, it had been Leon's time, but it was now his, and so on.

I liked Leon Spinks a great deal and had deep respect for him. I recognized him to be – insofar as he was anything in mainstream culture – a figure of amusement, even of mild ridicule. Attached to any such figure is the subliminal hope that they will lose, and preferably lose humiliatingly. It was my job to see that that didn't happen. I could not have failed more thoroughly.

As expected, John Carlo flew past the Commission. So did Jimmy Harrison, who I'd arranged to bring in as Melvin Foster's opponent as a favor to Dennis Rappaport. Jimmy had been winless over the last eight years, going 0-15-2 during that time, so he was really being fed to the lions with Foster, who was 15-1-1 – his only loss coming by split decision to former world champion Trevor Berbick. I felt bad for Jimmy, who I knew was going to get beaten up for his payday, so I checked in with him and his trainer Papa Ray Drayton.

Spinks' career went downhill following his defeat in a rematch with the aging Ali.

Jimmy's fights weren't fixed – he just couldn't fight – so there was no business to get straight; it was just a little social call.

Leon was having fun in the dressing room before the fight. Not a hint of nerves. Some drunken street person from his past had somehow sweet-talked his way in, and the two of them were laughing away, recounting happy times of their youth spent drinking Boone's Farm Strawberry Hill Wine together. The drunk told Leon that the cheap pink soda pop that would get you seriously looped, if you sat around on the stoop drinking it all day, was back on the market. A cause for rejoicing. Leon, who no longer drank, seemed as thrilled by the prospect as the drunk. His eyes narrowed in an expression of faux-inebriated bliss.

This joie de vivre was pretty much what he brought into the ring with him for the main event. He wasn't the only one happy to be there. The drug dealers from Panic Promotions had their own candidate doing the introductions for the main event. Three feet from us in the center of the ring was civic leader/crackhead Marion Barry himself, the effects of a bulky holiday sweater that would have ordinarily made him look festive and slightly avuncular compromised by his knotted brow and perplexed expression. Barry had a small piece of paper in his palm, and was almost inaudibly mouthing the words it contained. Something about those words was troubling him.

I inched closer. He was worrying a phrase, modifying its inflection with each repetition.

"The foam-ah hev-weight chapeen. The former heava-weight champ-yun. Duh fuh-muh hebbyweigh' champin of the worl'."

The mayor was working on his street voice, trying to remember how it should sound. I looked at him. He looked back, gave me a small smile and apologetic shrug.

It hadn't once occurred to me that Leon might lose. It hadn't even occurred to John Carlo in any realistic way that Leon might lose. We had even joked about it before the fight. He'd called me to ask, "What if I win?"

"John, you're a tough guy. I know that. But you'd have to knock him out to get the win. And how likely is it that a guy who's never fought before could knock out the guy who beat Ali for the title? I don't care how shot he is. He's an Olympic gold medalist."

John laughed. "I know, I know. He's gonna kill me. But, ya know, what if?"

Here's where I made the most inexcusable mistake of my managerial career. I said, "If you can beat him, beat him. If he can't beat someone who's never fought before, he shouldn't be in the ring."

The bell rang, and I walked from the corner to the front row, where I sat with two associates. The fighters met near Spinks's corner and Leon extended his right glove in a brotherly tap which John Carlo accepted and returned. For some reason, Leon repeated the gesture; it was as if he couldn't make the transition from bonhomie to fight mode. John discontinued the lovefest and stepped inside Spinks's overextended right hand to land a perfect left hook that dropped Leon straight back onto the canvas where his skull cracked full force, his body laying partially outside the ropes. I told my colleagues, "The fight's over," and moved back to the corner. From there I tried to signal the ref to stop the fight. Leon just beat the very slow count, but he was completely out of it, unable to offer even a token defense. The referee, as unprepared for what had happened as everyone else was, seemed not to quite believe what he'd seen, so let the fight go on. The crowd had set up a collective primal howl of supersonic volume – screaming for the kill, laughing and pointing into the ring, yelling that the fight was fixed, with some shrieking for the referee to stop it.

Fighters either have or don't have a killer instinct. There's nothing you can do to change it. It turned out that John Carlo had a natural killer instinct. He expertly positioned Leon onto the ropes across from his corner and unloaded with a series of hard – hard even by professional standards – left hooks that dropped Leon again. I was about a foot away, and was frantically trying to signal to the ref to stop the fight. I could see that Spinks's mouth was dripping a lot of blood; it was already covering his chin. At this point, a commissioner stepped onto the far apron of the ring, wildly waving his arms to get the referee's attention. He was ignored. A towel came sailing into the ring from Charles Hamm. Nothing. It took an endless additional fifteen seconds – and ten more solid punches – before the referee emerged from his stupor and stopped the fight. Leon, stiff-legged and bleeding profusely, tried to make it back to his corner. He stumbled and nearly fell. I got to the corner as he did. He was semiconscious, not really aware of his surroundings. The crowd, now that the fight was over, had transitioned into party time, if a party can be said to have a vicious undertone. The noise was still deafening. Leon didn't seem to know to sit down. His mouthpiece was removed, and I could see that there was a disturbing amount of thick blood in his mouth. He would have already swallowed a lot of it. His eyes were glazed. He was blinking over and over again. He was an accident victim.

I couldn't shake the crowd's horrible reaction to the knockout. It was a hateful mixture of undisguised anger, inchoate but palpable glee, and gloating.

But here's boxing: by the time the official decision was announced in the ring, I was already John Carlo's manager. Dennis Rappaport and I had already staged a confrontation in front of the cameras between John and Melvin Foster. Business never sleeps.

WORLD BEAT

U.K.

BY GARETH A DAVIES

MATCHROOM GETS INTO DAZN

The most far-reaching news in June – just after the demise and collapse of the undisputed heavyweight title contest between Tyson Fury and Anthony Joshua due to an arbitration ruling – was the seismic shift away from linear television with digital sports streaming platform DAZN becoming the global home of Matchroom Boxing and its fighters. Apart from Joshua, who will stay with Sky's pay-per-view arm for now (understandable given the fighter's wide reach with the British public), the new digital shift was set for July of this year, with Matchroom chairman Eddie Hearn terminating an eight-year broadcast deal with Sky Sports in the U.K. Hearn and DAZN have been building together in the USA since 2018, and it came as no surprise.

In a five-year deal reportedly worth nine figures, Matchroom's promotions on British soil will be available on DAZN in the U.K. and Ireland for the first time, but the target is blanket domination on a globally digital scale, admitted the promoter.

It certainly represents a game-changer. Hearn began the move with the return of three events in the Matchroom *Fight Camp* series, conceived last year at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and staged at the company HQ in the British countryside. It was a gamble, a success story, and it paid off for the promoter.

Eddie Hearn (center) and DAZN consummated their relationship with a massive broadcast deal.

"Game. Changed. This historic deal builds on the success and momentum of our long-term partnership with Matchroom around the world and solidifies

DAZN at the forefront of the global sports streaming era," said James Rushton, DAZN's co-CEO.

Hearn added that it had been a "monumental decision."

"Pushing the boundaries is something we will always continue to do, and we needed a partner that shared our vision for boxing, and who was also willing to make the investment to make those dreams a reality," he added.

Hearn's newly formed production and content business, Matchroom Media, will now be responsible for live production across DAZN events. It is a marked step away from traditional ways of broadcasting and a move toward the way in which the Ultimate Fighting Championship has worked with its broadcast partners, creating content from an "in-house" setup.

For the record, Matchroom Boxing's last Sky Sports event came from Newcastle, on June 12, amid controversy. In the headline fight, referee Steve Gray ignored the towel thrown from the corner of Lewis Ritson by the local fighter's father, Dave, under an onslaught from unbeaten Argentine Jeremias Ponce in the 10th round. Gray threw the towel out but eventually stopped the contest later in the round after Ritson had been down three times. During commercial breaks and between bouts, Sky Sports was intent on showcasing promos from its new partner, Bob Arum's Top Rank Inc. Top Rank's overseas shows will be aired on Sky Sports, with U.K. prime time shows under the umbrella of Boxxer, headed by new promoter Ben Shalom. It will be interesting to see how Sky Sports organically grows local coverage in this way. The departure, I understand, has brought a paradigm shift, with insiders telling me that "it will all be done very differently" and will be "fighter led." Interesting times.

Young heavyweight Daniel Dubois will waste no time in challenging the best in the division, declaring that a rematch with nemesis Joe Joyce remains high on his hitlist after making his return to the ring with a spectacular second-round knockout of Romanian Bogdan Dinu in Telford, with a crowd of 1,000 permitted in the arena. Erasing the ghosts of his first career defeat last November (to Joyce), Dubois flattened his opponent with a huge right hand, getting back on course after the 23-year-old's burgeoning career was derailed last year and he was labelled "a quitter" in some quarters when he took a knee in the 10th round. That night, the British, European and Commonwealth titles were on the line. But others believed that Dubois had done the right thing – and lived to fight another day – after medics said he had suffered a broken orbital bone and nerve damage.

Dubois notched the 15th stoppage of his 17-fight career against Dinu. "I was a little nervous, but I feel great. There were some nerves, but I'm human. After the loss to Joyce, it didn't take long for me to know I wanted to be back in there. This is my life," he explained, adding that he had been bolstered, pre-fight, with the news that his sister Caroline Dubois had qualified in the lightweight division for the Olympic Games just hours earlier at an event in Paris with the GB amateur team. "It was a great feeling knowing Caroline had done that, and it gave me a huge lift," he explained. Promoter Frank Warren revealed that the next step will be pushing the WBA for a contest with Trevor Bryan for the WBA's "regular" title belt. "This was the test to see if Daniel still has it, and it is onwards and upwards for him," commented Warren. "Daniel can knock anyone out in the heavyweight division." Time will tell.

In Manchester, Katie Taylor retained her lightweight championship after narrowly prevailing on points over Natasha Jonas in a brilliant advert for women's boxing. It was a thrilling contest, and after 10 rounds of relentless action – in the first major boxing event in Manchester to take place since February 2020 – Taylor won the razor-tight contest by unanimous decision: 96-94 and 96-95, twice. Your correspondent scored the fight a draw. For the two elite female fighters, it was a chance to meet again after their bout nine years ago at the London Olympic Games. The bout lit up the crowd there and did so again this time in Manchester; the see-sawing action was testament to how much both have improved. No quarter was given on either side. Sadly, there was no crowd to witness it and celebrate it live inside the arena. Taylor said afterward: "I definitely showed the heart of a champion in there, and that's what won me the fight in the end. I'm just delighted to come out of it with the belts and still undefeated. 18-0, onwards and upwards. This is what I'm in the sport for, I want to be involved in the biggest fights. There's plenty of those fights out there for me."

Jonas had told me going into the fight that victory would see her "find peace." She gave everything in a tantalizing denouement as both women tore into each other for the final two minutes and then immediately embraced. It would be no surprise to see them play it back and fight again.

Finally – and sadly – there were many affectionate memories offered on the colourful life of Kirkland Laing, which ended at the age of 66. The Jamaican-born British welterweight boxer nicknamed "The Gifted One" had a 20-year career, the highlight of which was the split decision win over Panamanian legend Roberto Durán in September 1982, which The Ring Magazine chose as the Upset of the Year. Laing was a two-time winner of the British welterweight title and won the EBU welterweight title in 1990. He had retired from boxing in 1994 with a record of 43 victories, 12 defeats and one draw.

Gareth A Davies is the boxing writer for the London Telegraph.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

Nkosinathi Joyi (left) was the favorite against Ayanda Ndulani, but it was Ndulani who went home victorious.

Recent months have been a busy period for South African fighters. Two veterans returned with mixed results and a bright young star got his international career back on track.

Nkosinathi Joyi missed weight for his strawweight bout against Ayanda Ndulani, but the 38-year-old southpaw was the favorite going in. He was ranked by The Ring and coming off an impressive win over Joey Canoy, although that bout took place in December 2019.

In the end, age, ring rust and a belligerent start by Ndulani was too much for Joyi to overcome, as he succumbed to a devastating fourth-round knockout. A right by Ndulani in the first round hurt him badly. Moments later, a right uppercut slammed home. Ndulani was on him with a left hook and a series of rights, sending Joyi to the canvas.

Joyi clambered to his feet and got through the round, but in the second stanza, another right put him down again. He barely made it to his feet, somehow hanging in there.

In the third, Joyi seemed to recover, boxing better behind his jab while Ndulani took his foot off the gas.

The comeback was not to be. In the fourth round, Ndulani landed a damaging uppercut and then a right that sent Joyi falling back onto the ropes, which bounced him face-first onto the floor. The fight was waved over without a count at the 1:31 mark.

Joyi, a former IBF titleholder with wins over the likes of Florante Condes, Raul Garcia and Katsunari Takayama, did not announce his retirement, but it is difficult to see him coming back from such a devastating defeat at his age.

Ayanda Ndulani improves to 11-2-1 and it will be interesting to see whether he can build on his breakout win.

★★★

Former Ring junior flyweight champion Hekkie Budler returned after an absence of more than two years to score a unanimous 12-round decision over Filipino Jonathan Almacen by scores of 117-111, 118-111 and 118-111.

After a tentative start, with Budler trying to find his timing, the fight heated up in the fourth round when Almacen launched some left hooks to the body, prompting a two-fisted response from Budler. The pair exchanged on even terms at the end of the round, but Budler started getting the better of his opponent in the fifth, stunning him with two left hooks. Budler got his jab going and the combinations started to flow as he showed the skills that got him to the top.

Almacen tried hard to turn the fight around in the eighth, landing a good right and some short punches inside; Budler responded by landing a one-two before Alamacen came roaring back again.

From then on it was all Budler, who closed the fight in style in the last round, sending the sweat flying with a straight right, a right uppercut moments later and a triple left hook.

Budler and trainer/manager Colin Nathan believe that he has one more world title run left before calling it a day. To write him off would be a mistake. The tenacious "Hexecutioner" has made a career of proving experts wrong.

CANADA

BY JAMIE REBNER

When it comes to the pandemic, life is only now starting to slowly open back up here in Canada as vaccination efforts ramp up and COVID cases decline. While we

are not out of the woods yet, we are optimistic that a return to normalcy is around the corner.

But while gyms have reopened, live boxing events are still few and far between. With tighter health regulations in Canada, Eye of the Tiger Management (EOTTM) has had to look elsewhere to keep its talented roster active. As a result, they have had several events in Mexico as part of their *Commando* series.

On June 4, *Commando 5* featured a return to Cuernavaca, where three of EOTTM's notable athletes – David Lemieux, Erik Bazinyan and Simon Kean – made a return to the ring. But if you were expecting close, competitive fights, this was not the card for you. All three fighters cruised to victory with relatively little resistance.

Bazinyan (26-0, 20 KOs) made his pandemic debut in blitzing Scott Sigmon (35-15-1, 18 KOs) in two rounds, thanks to an active jab and powerful right hand. Sigmon had gone rounds with Lionell Thompson, Luis Arias and Matt Korobov, so it's a good sign that Bazinyan dispatched him quickly. It's easy to see why EOTTM has high hopes for Bazinyan, but he needs to step up his level of competition. While he's undefeated and only 26 years old, he hasn't yet faced a worthy contender in the super middleweight division. His last three opponents all had double-digit losses on their record, which isn't helping him progress up the ranks.

Simon "The Grizzly" Kean (20-1, 19 KOs) beat Don Haynesworth (16-6-1, 14 KOs) when the American stayed on his stool before starting the fifth round. This win was Kean's fifth in a row since his lone loss to Dillon Carman in 2018, which he avenged. It was also Kean's first fight since the pandemic began, so he benefited from getting a few rounds in. Given that heavyweights typically develop later into their careers, Kean, 32, has some time to make his way up the rankings. But considering he struggled with a faded Siarhei Liakhovich last year, there is still much improvement to be made to his game. Against Haynesworth, Kean would have benefited from a more concerted body attack, which could have helped him end the fight even sooner.

In the main event, David Lemieux (43-4, 36 KOs) feasted on David Zegarra (34-5, 21 KOs), knocking his overmatched opponent down twice before finishing him in the second. Lemieux's left hook, his money punch, caused both knockdowns and did all the damage. But this win doesn't do much for Lemieux. We already knew that he is capable of knocking out fighters willing to stand and trade with him. But we haven't seen him against another slick, skilled boxer since Billy Joe Saunders outclassed him in December 2017 to know if he's made the improvements to his game to deal with that type of style.

If Lemieux, The Ring's No. 7-rated super middleweight, wants to have any hope of beating Canelo, Caleb Plant or David Benavidez, he must face at least a couple of ranked contenders first. A perfect next fight for him would be against The Ring's 10th-ranked Carlos Gongora (20-0, 15 KOs), who has plenty of boxing skills and is a solid puncher who would test Lemieux to see what he has left in the tank.

In the end, the fights for *Commando 5* went as expected. And I understand the rationale for soft matchmaking. All three fighters all deserved tune-up fights to shake off the rust and get their confidence back. Kean and Bazinyan hadn't fought in over a year, while Lemieux had been off for eight months. It's also hard to get more prominent names in the ring right now because of COVID-related travel restrictions. At the same time, such easy fights don't allow an opportunity for fighters to develop

David Lemieux reminded us that he hits hard against David Zegarra, but the win told us little else.

and demonstrate their skills, because their opponents are blown away so quickly.

Kean and Bazinyan are still largely unproven prospects, despite having over 20 pro bouts, with Bazinyan having the higher ceiling. Although they both still have time to reach their potential, I am tired of seeing them face weak opposition to pad their records. If their level of competition doesn't increase soon, they will stagnate and waste their prime years. Unlike Kean and Bazinyan, Lemieux is a veteran ranked in the Ring top 10. But consistently facing low-level opposition isn't helping him either. If he wants to be ready for a world championship fight soon, he needs to beat opponents that will challenge him to show that he is prepared for another title run in the twilight of his career.

Hopefully, Eye of the Tiger Management matches all three fighters against much more challenging opposition in their next bouts. With the pandemic hopefully coming to a close, the promoter should secure better opponents that will genuinely test the marquee names in their stable. And that's precisely what they need.

PHILIPPINES

BY RYAN SONGALIA

For many, the first reaction to the news of Manny Pacquiao agreeing to fight Errol Spence Jr. elicited a "what?" response. Pacquiao, who had fought the greatest featherweights and junior lightweights of the previous era, including Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales and Juan Manuel Marquez, was now fighting an undefeated, prime and unified welterweight titleholder.

At a time when his contemporaries are fighting exhibitions against other retired fighters or YouTubers, Pacquiao is taking on No. 6 in The Ring's pound-for-pound rankings on August 21 in Las Vegas.

Pacquiao hasn't seemed over-awed by Spence, telling reporters in Manila that Spence is slower than Keith Thurman, whom Pacquiao defeated by split decision in his last fight in July 2019. Sean Gibbons, President of MP Promotions, is also not overly concerned about the matchup.

"I think Keith Thurman was a tougher fight than Errol Spence, style-wise," said Gibbons, reasoning that Thurman was more athletic, had better movement and was more of a puncher. "Errol is a good fighter, but you know what you're getting. He's gonna use the jab, he's gonna walk you down, he's gonna try to throw punches. If he does that to the senator, he's gonna get hit on the chin. And maybe those false teeth he has come flying out."

Pacquiao will arrive in the U.S. for a training camp in early July, giving him seven weeks to prepare in the U.S. instead of his usual 4-5 weeks.

A win for the 42-year-old Philippine senator would be an all-time great achievement in the sport – and would likely boost his popularity among voters in the 2022 presidential elections. Because, like it or not, those things matter in politics.

The hostility towards all-Filipino world championship fights never made sense to me. How can someone be champion of the world if they aren't champion of their country first? That mindset seems to be in its death throes after Nonito Donaire and John Riel Casimero elected to unify their bantamweight titles on August 14.

The fight announcement came as a big surprise as Casimero had been scheduled to face Guillermo Rigondeaux in the second defense of the belt he won by knocking out Zolani Tete in late 2019. The 38-year-old Donaire is red hot after becoming the oldest bantamweight titleholder in history by demolishing previously unbeaten Nordine Oubaali on May 29 to win the WBC bantamweight title.

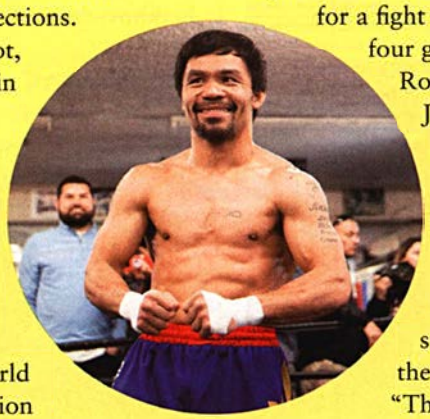
Gibbons said the Filipino vs. Filipino matchup wasn't a hurdle for Casimero, because he doesn't see it that way since Donaire was raised in California.

"Casimero is not a fan of Nonito Donaire. It doesn't matter if it's Filipino-Filipino, because in his mind, [Casimero is] Filipino and [Donaire] is an American," explained Gibbons. "Donaire is more like an American fighter; that's why he's not caught on as much in the Philippines. He did well, but I don't think he's embraced like he should be."

★★★

Jerwin Ancajas put on an entertaining fight in his ninth title defense, dispensing with Jonathan Rodriguez by unanimous decision on April 10.

Gibbons says the plan is to have Ancajas make a 10th defense in September or October and then push for a fight with one of the top four guys at 115 pounds: Roman Gonzalez, Juan Francisco Estrada, Srisaket Sor Rungvisai or Carlos Cuadras. Ancajas has held his title for five years now and has yet to register a signature win. What's the holdup?

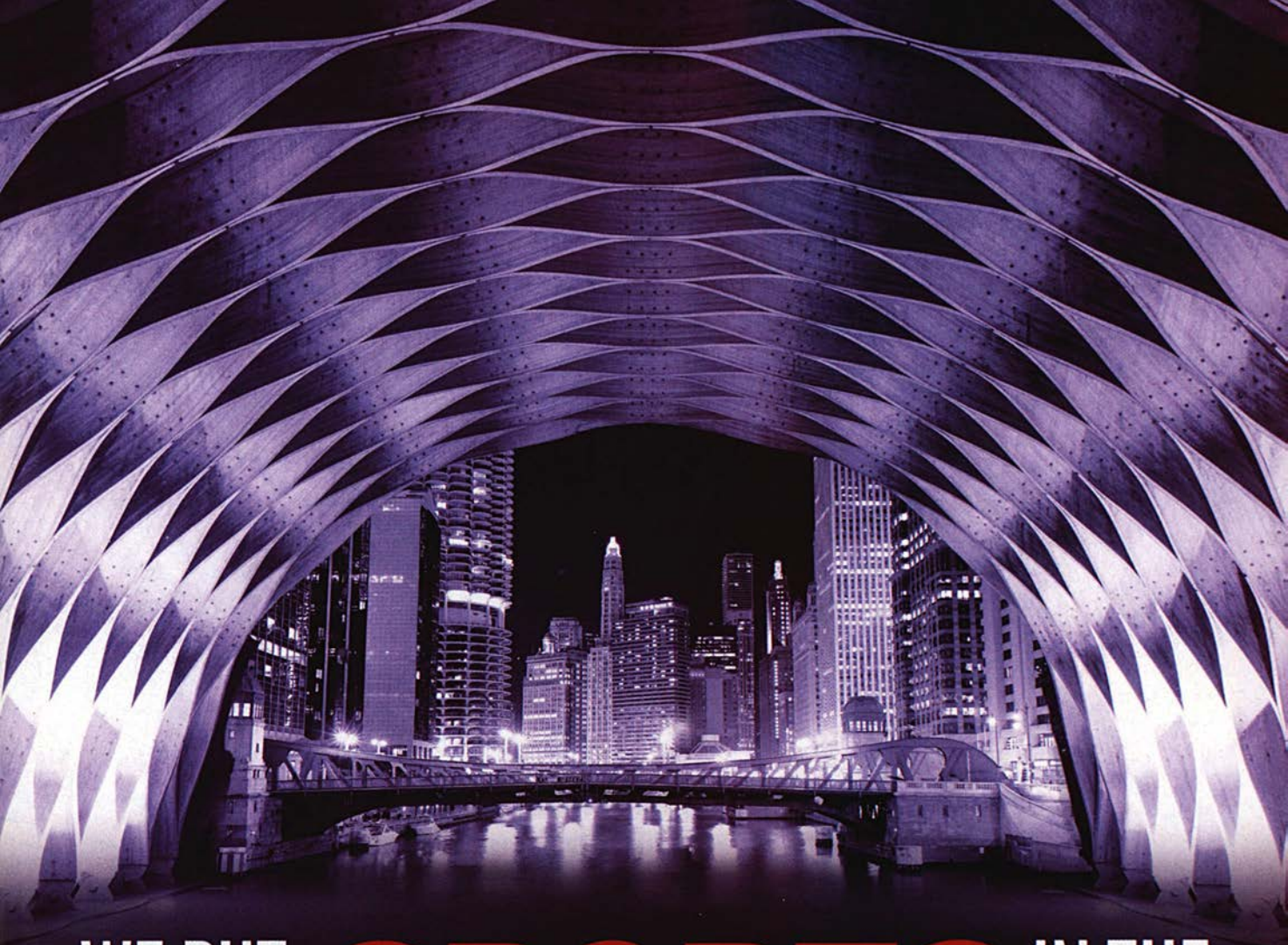


Pacquiao will be ripped and ready, as always.

"The issue is those guys are fighting each other," said Gibbons. "Win or lose, those are the fights that Jerwin wants. The time is now. [He's going to] finish up with some big fights and then move up to 118."

★★★

Lastly, I leave you with this: Nonito's surname is pronounced Dough-Nigh-Reh. Let's retire the Dough-nayr pronunciation and put some respect on his name.



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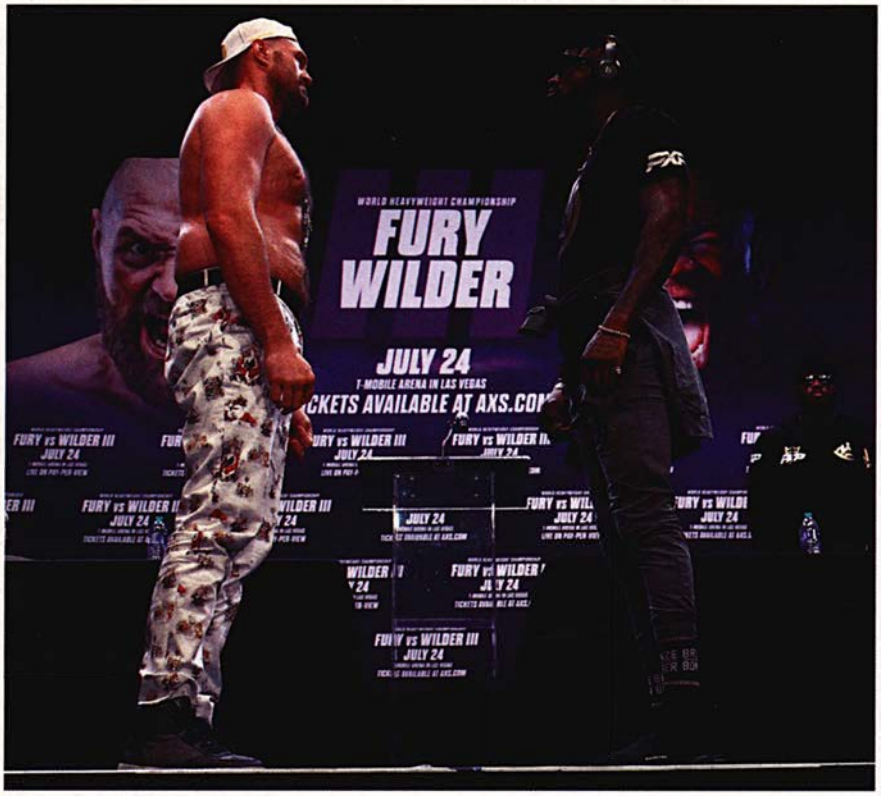
DOUBLE B SPORTS

BELOW THE RADAR:

On February 2, 1977, then-junior welterweight champion Wilfred Benitez took on volume-punching New Yorker Harold Weston in a non-title bout at Madison Square Garden. Unbeaten in 28 fights, Benitez was the overwhelming favorite in this attractive 10-rounder, but a spirited performance from Weston resulted in a majority decision draw and the first blemish on El Radar's sparkling resume. Benitez would later win the welterweight crown from Carlos Palomino, and he outpointed Weston over 15 rounds in his first title defense.

COMING UP



Heavyweight champion Tyson Fury and Deontay Wilder will make it a trilogy when they meet again on July 24 in Las Vegas.

JULY

JULY 17 – Jermell Charlo vs. Brian Castano, junior middleweights (for Charlo's Ring/IBF/WBA/WBC and Castano's WBO title), San Antonio, Texas (Showtime).

JULY 24 – Tyson Fury vs. Deontay Wilder, heavyweights (for Fury's Ring/WBC titles), Las Vegas (Fox/ESPN PPV).

JULY 31 – Conor Benn vs. Adrian Granados, welterweights, Brentwood, U.K. (DAZN).

AUGUST

AUG. 7 – Kid Galahad vs. James Dickens, featherweights (for vacant IBF title), Brentwood, U.K. (DAZN).

AUG. 14 – Teofimo Lopez vs. George Kambosos Jr., lightweights (for Lopez's Ring/IBF/WBA/WBO titles), Miami (Triller PPV). Also, Franchon Crews-Dezurn vs. Elin Cederroos, super middleweights (for vacant Ring, Crews-Dezurn's WBC/WBO and Cederroos' IBF/WBA titles).

AUG. 14 – Nonito Donaire vs. John Riel Casimero, bantamweights (for Donaire's WBC and Casimero's WBO titles), Carson, California (Showtime).

AUG. 14 – Joshua Buatsi vs. Ricards Bolotniks, light heavyweights, Brentwood, U.K. (DAZN).

AUG. 21 – Manny Pacquiao vs. Errol Spence Jr., welterweights (for Spence's IBF/WBC titles), Las Vegas (Fox PPV).

AUG. 28 – David Benavidez vs. Jose Uzcategui, super middleweights, location TBA (Showtime).

SEPTEMBER

SEPT. 11 – Oscar De La Hoya vs. Vitor Belfort, cruiserweights (exhibition), Las Vegas (Triller PPV).

SEPT. 11 – Stephen Fulton vs. Brandon Figueroa, junior featherweights (for Fulton's WBO and Figueroa's WBC titles), location TBA (Showtime).

Cleto Reyes USA
Boxing Equipment

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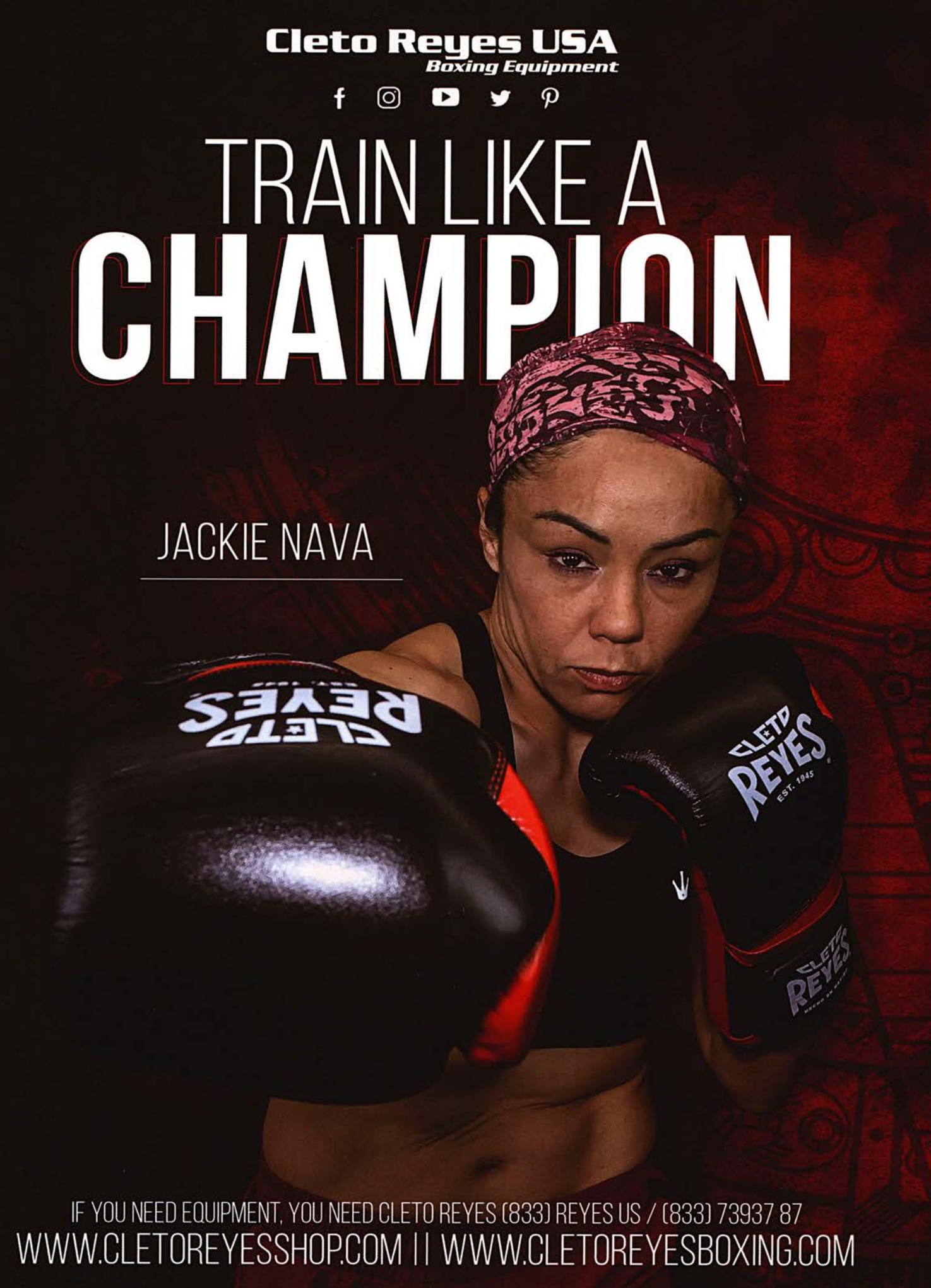
JACKIE NAVA



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